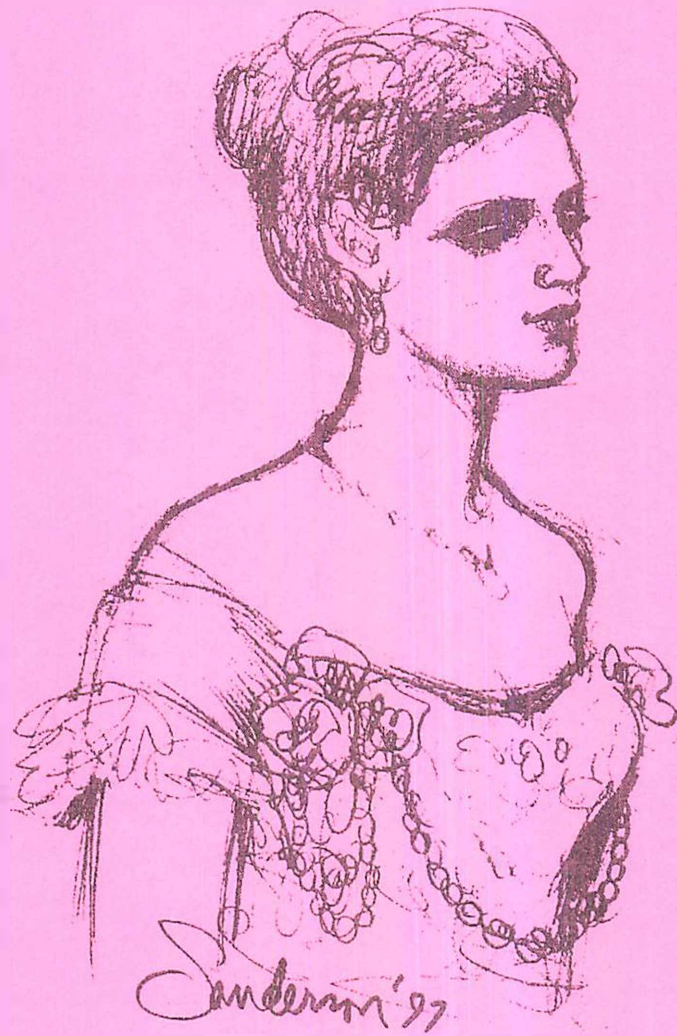


Proper Boskonian



#43

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Official Notices

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The Editor Speaks-Writes

by Lisa Hertel

This issue of *Proper Boskonian* was delayed due to the birth of my first child, Liana Rebekah Hertel (for details and a photo, go to www.nesfa.org/hertel.html). Sleep deprivation does not give you more time in your life. Alas, the happy occasion was tempered by the death of long-time NESFAn and friend D. Montgomery Wells, best known for his ability with power tools and quick wit (especially for puns). There is an appreciation for Monty on the last page of this issue; more can be found in NESFA's Instant Message #624 (April 29, 1998). This news was followed by a report in *Ansible* 129 (April 1998) that Ian Gunn's health is poor; I wish him speedy recovery.

On a happier note, I'd like to congratulate our contributors over the past year who have been nominated for a Hugo award: Michael A. Burstein (Best Novelette); Bob Devney, Evelyn Leeper, and Joseph T. Major (Best Fan Writer); Brad Foster, Ian Gunn, Teddy Harvia, and Joe Mayhew (Best Fan Artist). I wish them all the best of luck (although Bob Devney swears he's going to loose to that Brit, Langford).

For future issues, I have lined up the winner of the 1998 NESFA short story contest, as well as the three stories that received honorable mention. All are slated for professional or semi-professional publication, and stood out from a field of almost 80 entries. The next issue will also have Boskone reports, and perhaps a Worldcon report if time and space permit it. We also have lots of comic strips, as well, including *The Space*Time Buccaneers*. Until then, enjoy your summer!



"This is Your Brain Online"

by Zane Rokkiyn

Fred wasn't surprised to see his brain appear on the desktop, because he'd always considered himself a Mac person. Now he wondered whether he dared to look inside it.

That morning he had answered the call of a distressed accountant named Theresa in Building Seven who had logged onto the network and gone to get coffee as usual, but when she returned had been confronted with a "T:" prompt. There had never been anything assigned to T: before, but that in itself did not distress Theresa. What upset her were the files she found there.

Fred opened his brain and studied its contents on the screen, then sighed with relief. It had worried him when the F: drive on Theresa's computer had showed no contents, but now he could see the reason: the contents of his brain had file names longer than eight characters, making them invisible to DOS machines.

His first reaction to the news that people's brains were appearing on the computer network was to tell everyone to make backups. After seven years of working with users, he had learned how to keep his rear covered. Even his peers in the computer-support department sometimes worked without spare copies, and this way when they came crying to him for help, he could keep a clear conscience. Granted, the human brain is known for its resourcefulness and built-in redundancy, but he really didn't know whether his disk tools would work with something that was definitely not a disk.

His second, similarly conditioned reaction was to tell everyone to change their passwords.

Fred selected "By Date" from the "View" menu and saw that the first file in the list was called, "Brain—view by date". He tried "View By Kind" and saw applications, folders, utilities—all the usual stuff. He found a folder called "People," opened it and selected "View By Name". Some were listed by first name, some by last name, but it didn't take long for him to find one of his ex-girlfriends. He double-clicked her icon and saw yet another list of files: still pictures, animations, transcripts and sound files of conversations they had had, every single memory of her. He dragged a particularly bad memory into the trash can but hesitated before deleting it.

"OK," he thought to himself. "Time to get serious. How did this happen?" Yesterday he had worked through lunch and most of the afternoon installing new network software on every computer on the laboratory campus. That meant that even if he and his software had had nothing to do with this—phenomenon, several hundred users would now assume he had done it on purpose—even the other computer people, and especially the management.

He started to look up the phone number of his representative at the networking company using the organizer he kept in his pocket, but then he decided that as long as his brain was so easily accessible he might as well use it instead.

"People's brains, appearing as file servers? Uh-huh. Fred, are you sure you should be working today?"

"Look, I'd prove it to you by tapping into somebody else's, but I told them all to change their passwords."

"Is it limited to your site?"

"Far as I can tell," said Fred, flipping through the lists of servers and brains on his screen. "They're organized by department as if they were just plugged in at their desks. What are you suggesting?"

"Well, since they're not plugged in at their desks, maybe this is affecting the networks of the companies next-door."

"We're in a residential neighborhood. There is no network next-door."

"How about the Internet? You are on the Internet, right?"

Fred thought about this for a moment. His job as network administrator didn't involve connections to the outside. All the Internet work was done by a thirty-year-old kid named Benji.

Benji came scampering into Fred's office. "Hey, dude, check out my new home page!" he cried and then popped out the door again to spread the news.

"I'll find out and call you back," said Fred to the phone as he hung up. "Benji, wait!"

"You didn't actually put your brain on the Internet, did you?" Fred asked as he waited for Benji's home page to appear on his computer screen. The title of the page had been changed to, "Welcome to Benji's Brain!"

"No, dude, the 'firewall' won't allow anyone outside to get into our network. They just connect to the Internet server, 'cause it's outside. So I programmed my brain to copy stuff to the outside box whenever I want. Isn't that cool?"

Benji's Brain contained links to "My friends' home pages," "My awesome memory collection," "All the best computer jokes," and "My favorite bands."

"Aside from the 'memory' thing, this looks just like any other home page."

"Yeah, it looks the same. But I can change it around without ever touching a keyboard. Click 'Reload,' dude." Fred clicked the 'Reload' button on his screen and a link to "Video clips from concerts where I was sober" appeared after "My favorite bands."

Fred pointed his mouse at the new link to see the name of the "concerts" file. It had four periods in it. Fred was sickened by the thought that someone's brain was actually organized in UNIX.

"You don't have to write a program or convert to HTML or anything. You just think about stuff, and, and your brain just does it. 'Cause it's your brain, dude!"

Fred found himself thinking about a frying egg.

It was less than a week later that other departments began to question Fred. Property wanted to know who, in violation of union contract, had installed cabling to connect several hundred new servers to the network. Procurement wanted to know where that cabling had come from. Fred answered that there was no cabling, but that answer only got him tangled up with Document Conversion and Security. When he told them that no one off-site could use or even understand the technology, he was asked by Patenting how he planned to keep that information proprietary.

Then, after nearly a week of telephone arguments, the nagging abruptly ceased—on a direct order from the Laboratory Administrator. Fred was summoned to her office.

"I want to congratulate you, Mr. Reynolds" said the elderly woman, somewhere between her sixties and her eighties, as she swung slowly from side to side in a leather chair of more than twice her mass, "on dealing so well with this situation."

Fred nodded his head silently. "From time to time, someone here in the Lab makes a discovery of revolutionary importance." She gestured at a trophy case on the wall. "When a discovery cannot be explained, it must be reproduced and verified before anyone outside hears about it, lest we have—shall we say, a Cold Fusion controversy. Your discovery has been repeatedly reproduced, but we have yet to explain it."

Fred cleared his throat. "Perhaps the, um, next course of action would be to invite networking experts to investigate—" he began.

"Yes," said the Lab Administrator. "But that would be complicated by the fact that we do government contract work as well as commercial research. The government would never allow an inspection from the private sector because we have a great deal of classified information stored on the network—particularly in some of our brains. And yet, considering certain corners we have cut in order to compete commercially, a government inspection would be—undesirable."

Fred gulped. His coworkers' use of pirated software was assumed to be a secret from the management. Maybe other departments were doing the same things. If the laboratories had let their equipment go uninspected to save on costs, a single government inspector could close the whole lab.

"While you think about that, I also want to congratulate you on the—what did you call it?—'optimization' of my own computer. It had become so slow and unreliable that my staff was joking about it going 'senile.' Now it's as good as new again."

Fred waved off the compliment. "Just part of my job," he said. It was technically part of someone else's job, but that someone else had been on vacation.

The Administrator leaned forward. "Mr. Reynolds, they're saying the same thing about me! They say I forget things. They say I don't learn new information as quickly as I used to. They say I'm paranoid," she said, gesturing to a closed-circuit TV screen near her desk. "They'll soon be saying I should retire. I want to see them eat their words."

"With respect, ma'am, you want me to optimize your brain?"

"That, Mr. Reynolds, is precisely what I want."

"It's not—quite—the same, ma'am. No one understands the current organization, much less the optimal one. Only your own brain can know that."

The Administrator smiled tightly. "But my brain, Mr. Reynolds, is the one being accused of mistakes. If I must carry out this procedure myself, I will want complete confidence that I can return to my present state if anything goes wrong."

"A backup, ma'am? That, I can do for you. Just log in at your computer and I'll take care of it." Fred started up one of his usual disk-copying programs which would leave the organization of any storage device unaltered. He had had to backup several users' brains in the past two weeks when they admitted, predictably enough, that they had never backed up anything before.

He told the program to copy the Administrator's brain onto her hard disk. "Surely it won't fit," she protested.

"Brains store things—very compactly," said Fred mysteriously. "Benji—Mr. Clifford—has already had to restore his brain from backup once, so I can assure you it works."

The program clicked and chuffed away for about a minute before presenting its first error message. "Could not read from sector 68382," it said. "Bad sector. Abort, Retry, Ignore?" Fred quickly selected "Ignore," and the program continued.

The Administrator resumed breathing to say, "Bad sector?"

Fred licked his lips. "We use only a small fraction of our brain capacity. If cells in one area die, the brain usually moves that information somewhere else. When you go through with the optimization you can keep everything important away from those bad spots. I'm sure it's nothing to worry about. Ma'am."

The computer gave the same error message for sectors 93285 to 93298. Fred pressed the "I" key every time.

The Lab Administrator began to pace. "It doesn't say 'naturally dead cells,' does it? It doesn't say 'killed by alcohol in your youth' or 'breathed too many fumes at the gas station.'"

"The program doesn't know it's copying from a human brain, ma'am. It just knows it can't get data from those spots. I'm sure Mr. Clifford had at least ten times as many—"

"It says 'Bad sector,' damn it! It could be a tumor!"

"I'm not a doctor," said Fred sheepishly. "A doctor could tell you."

The Administrator sat down in her chair. "I apologize," she said after a pause. The computer was unable to read from 23 more sectors. "I'll get a CAT scan," she decided quietly.

The Lab Administrator took two days off from work, and in her absence more people approached Fred for favors. An executive whose secretary had just quit wanted to install a spell-checker in his brain, but Fred had to explain that even if he were sure the file format was compatible it would be a violation of copyright. A college student employed for the summer wanted help reorganizing her mental notes from the previous semester's classes, but Fred claimed that wasn't part of his job description.

A reclusive draftsman who had never played chess before in his life won the annual employee chess tournament but at the last minute, torn by conscience, refused to accept his trophy. Word spread from one coworker to another that a few hours before the tournament he had copied a computer chess program to his brain. Fred found out about it the next morning from seven happily scandalized friends.

When the Lab Administrator returned to work, she immediately called Fred to her office. "The tumor," she said, "is small. It does not appear to be malignant, though I'll need to return for another scan to be sure. In the meantime, I have gone through with the optimization and copied everything away from the effected area."

Fred licked his lips. "I'm glad to hear it, ma'am."

"So am I," the Administrator smiled. "You and your network have saved me from a rather unpleasant surprise." She swiveled back and forth in her chair in silence for a while. "Mr. Reynolds," she said abruptly, "have you researched the philosophical implications of your discovery?"

"No, ma'am, not seriously. I'm very busy, but I could look into it."

"Consider it an assignment."

Fred had gotten rather adept at using his brain. Undaunted by the number of years that had passed since he took philoso-

phy in college and the tiny amount he consciously remembered, he found his old mental notes from the class in more or less intact condition. They were in a cerebral folder named "Philosophy." He had been a very organized student.

He found what he was looking for in the notes about George Berkeley's Idealism. At the point in the dialogue when "Philonous" triumphantly proved to "Hylas" that all minds and ideas exist within the mind of God, Fred had scribbled in the margin, "God is the ultimate file server!" In his mind, and on the screen before him now, he had developed this analogy further until he finally wrote a research paper on it. His professor had given him a C, but he was still fond of the concept.

After demonstrating that matter cannot be proven to exist except as ideas within minds, Berkeley had had to explain where ideas come from. From the mind of God, he had answered, as if this were obvious. Berkeley's God puts ideas into minds and takes them away again in such a systematic manner that people perceive them as a physical, material world.

Fred's philosophy class had tried for two hours to refute Berkeleyan Idealism, but since all their evidence for the existence of reality fit within his framework, it was impossible. But how did that apply to the current problem? Surely the Will of God hypothesis could not be refuted, but just as surely it should not be assumed!

Fred tried to think, distracted by the philosophy notes on his screen. How were people's brains connected to the network? Nobody knew. How was it possible for them to interface with computers? Well, these brains had experience with using computers. Then how could the computers affect the brains? Well, Theresa's brain had adapted to MS-DOS, Benji's to UNIX, and his own to Mac OS. That suggested a certain amount of cooperation on the brains' part. But why had it happened? That was the real kicker, worse even than "how." The "how" question could at least be hedged. There was no easy answer to any of the "why" questions—"why us" and "why now" included—except the Will of God hypothesis.

Fred knew this was bad news, but it had been an assignment.

"This is bad news," said the Lab Administrator as her chair glided from side to side. "We do government contract work. We can't take favors from God. It's unconstitutional. Someone will want to know which god we made a deal with and why we rejected the others. If we say it wasn't our choice, people who believe in free will can think we're promoting fatalism."

Fred tried to think of a way out. "We still haven't had an inspection. Perhaps there's another explanation."

"But if we even suggest that we've considered a theological explanation, there goes our credibility, and our contracts with it!"

Fred wanted very much to remind her that she had assigned him to consider that sort of explanation. In his desperation to say something else, he suggested, "But for all we know it could be—space aliens! Some sort of technological gift, and they want to see how we react before they give it to the rest of the planet. I hadn't thought of that before, but it makes just as much sense—"

"I think, Mr. Reynolds, that it would be in the best interests of the laboratory, as well as myself and yourself, if this discovery returned whence it came. I no longer want to know whether it was a gift from God or aliens or whether you somehow wished it into existence. I don't want to have to worry about whether it will affect our government work or our commercial work. I don't want it to affect any of our contracts. I just want it gone." Fred stood up. "Consider it an assignment," the Administrator added.

Fred sat down at his desk with a can of cola and a halfhearted determination to find a way to separate his users' brains from their computers. By the time a draftsman timidly entered his office, the can was sitting empty atop a pile of three open manuals.

Fred glanced up from the fourth manual. "Can I help you?"

"Um, hi, Mr. Reynolds?" said the draftsman uncertainly, his eyes wandering over Fred's cluttered bookshelves. "I'm Salerno? from Drafting?" he said with an inflection that rose uncertainly.

"Oh, the chess champion. Congratulations."

"Well, that's what I'm here about. See, I was wondering if you could help me forget it? I mean with the computer? I want to forget that any of it happened? 'cause I can't sleep? and it's all I can think about? I just wish I'd never done it?"

Fred turned back to his manual, where his thumb was marking a place on the page. "I'm really awfully busy, but you can do it yourself. Make a backup to your hard disk just in case, and then delete anything from the original you think will remind you. If there's anything about the incident you do want to remember, write it out on paper before you start so you can read it when you're done."

Salerno shifted his weight for a few seconds. "Um, I was also wondering? if there was any way you could—help other people? to forget it too?"

Fred looked up again. "Other people's memories aren't yours or mine to change. You'll just have to do it the old-fashioned way: play fair from now on." He held up the manual for Salerno to see. "Look, if I can figure out how to do this, your computer access to your brain will last only another few hours. So any changes you want to make will need to be soon."

"Thanks. Mr. Reynolds," said Salerno dejectedly as he crept back out the door.

Half an hour later, Fred had started another can of cola and was looking through a seventh manual. He was on the phone navigating a technical-support voicemail system when an alert appeared on his computer screen. "Virus detected on network! Intercepted while copying itself from SN-3225 to SN-4268."

Fred hung up the phone and brought up his virus-protection utility. When he was sure the computer virus had been destroyed, he pulled a notebook off his bookshelf and connected the offending serial number 3225 with a room number.

As he stormed down the hallway, he tried to think of all the ways a virus could have entered the lab's network. Everything that came over the Internet was checked at least once. Employees' disks of documents were classified as government property and should not be leaving the laboratory. And disks of legitimate software would be write-protected and certified virus-free. Plus, every personal computer was set up to scan every disk. So someone must have not only brought in an illegitimate software disk, they must have disabled the virus-checking program.

The room number Fred had found in his office led him to the drafting room—a honeycomb of unnumbered cubicles. On a hunch, Fred looked for Salerno's desk—and found the chess-playing draftsman sitting there semiconscious, staring vacantly at the center of his computer screen.

Fred stuck his head into the next cubicle. "Do you know anything about Salerno?" he asked.

The other draftsman leered. "Our chess champion? How much you wanna know?"

"Did he say anything a few minutes ago?"

"Yeah, he said he'd deleted something important by mistake, and he was gonna restore from backup." The man gestured at the complex blueprint on his own screen. "Happens all the time. Why you ask?"

"Do you know if he disabled his virus checker?"

The man shrugged. "Probably. He's always muttering about how long it takes to scan a disk."

Fred returned to Salerno's cubicle and turned the virus checker back on. He told it to scan the hard disk for damage, and it dutifully began the slow process. While waiting, Fred searched through the man's disk box, looking for the carrier of the virus. He found a blue one without a label, but when held up to the light it read, in shiny pencil graphite, the word "UltraChess."

"Isn't UltraChess a commercial product?" Fred asked of the cubicle wall.

"Yeah," came the voice from over the wall. "Hundred and fifty dollars. Salerno said a friend of his brother gave him a copy."

The virus checker finished its scan and reported that the only damaged file was the one called "Brain Backup."

Fred waved his hand in front of Salerno's eyes, then shook his vegetative body. He tossed the UltraChess disk into a wastebasket and called an ambulance.

The afternoon sun peered through the office's tinted glass, over the Lab Administrator's shoulder, and directly into Fred's eyes. Her guest chair was becoming very familiar to him.

"To what extent," she asked him, "do you estimate the laboratory is responsible for this accident?"

Fred cleared his throat. "I estimate not at all, ma'am. We provided him with a virus checker, but he chose not to use it. If it gets to the point where we have to explain how a computer virus was able to affect his brain, you and I know it wasn't our doing. The only thing I'm worried about is that I was the one who told him to hurry up and do the job himself."

The Administrator smiled. "In government work, Mr. Reynolds, anyone who encourages efficiency should be sainted. I'll see to it that martyrdom is not necessary." She allowed her smile to remain for a second before her face fell back to seriousness. "However, now that we know that computer viruses can incapacitate our employees, the risk must be removed. I followed your instructions as well, Mr. Reynolds; Mr. Salerno could have been me."

"With respect, ma'am, only if you were pirating software."

"I don't share your confidence. I've seen things go wrong with our network in the past, and the next time it happens I want every employee's brain safely off-line. I expect to come to work tomorrow morning and see everyone's brain only where it belongs." She tapped her forehead.

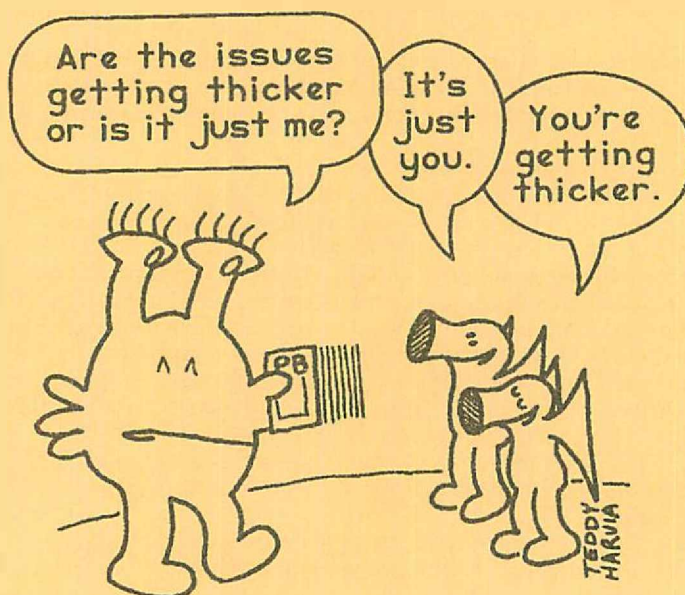
Fred finished a memorandum and sent it by electronic mail to all employees. He had tried to explain in it that the "network modifications" over the past few weeks had been "a temporary experiment," and that, regardless of how anyone felt about it, the experiment had now ended. The clock read 5:15; nearly everyone would now have left the lab for the day.

The 'phenomenon' had appeared just after he installed new network software on every computer in the lab. Now, after searching manuals and interrogating tech-support operators for hours, his only remaining option was to banish it by undergoing the same process in reverse. He would have to reinstall the old software on every computer, and it would probably take all evening. He picked up a box of CDs and floppy disks and sat down at the computer nearest his own—personal sentiment requested that his computer be the last one affected.

He tapped his neighbor's mouse to wake up the monitor and saw that she had left her computer connected to R: —her brain. On a whim, he decided to do one last DIR command and watch her memories scroll by. Instead the computer beeped, and its prompt changed to CURRENT DRIVE NOT VALID>.

A strange bubble formed in Fred's stomach as he tried to think of an explanation. He heard his own computer beep from across the room. He leaped up and saw the Mac OS version of the same ominous message: "Fred Reynolds: The file server has closed down." He clicked the only choice, an ironic "OK." The icon of his brain, still on the desktop, turned gray. He double clicked it, only to be told, "The shared disk 'Fred Reynolds' could not be opened, because you do not have enough access privileges."

Fred's eyes teared at the very thought of having insufficient access privileges to his own brain. He clicked "OK" again and watched helplessly as his brain fell into the trash can and disappeared.



Art by Teddy Harvia

"March Storm 1997"

March 09 - March 11, Washington DC

By Halliday Piel

There was a time when it was not unrealistic to imagine that humanity would move out to the Moon and then to the planets beyond, just like hard SF was predicting. Today, it's nearly the Year 2000, and all we do is sit in our armchairs watching *Deep Space Nine* or *Babylon 5*. Don't get me wrong, I love SF, but fiction is fiction.

My frustration with our space program led me to do something I never thought I would dare to do: go to Washington D.C., and tell our representatives what I and a growing number of frustrated Americans want to see happen in Space. This trip was made possible by Charles 'Chaz' Miller, the President of ProSpace, a citizens' lobby group I discovered by accident while surfing the web.

Chaz sees space as a physical place for all kinds of Americans to explore, exploit and develop, not as an elite science program protected by NASA. He has apparently succeeded in recruiting a staffer of Senator Dana Rohrabacher (R - CA), and is using this vehicle to push a Commercial Space Bill with a goal of opening up the frontier to private industry.

Last year, the bill (HR 3936) was passed by the House, but never made it to the Senate. It was proposed rather late in the game, and was hardly a matter of priority. This time Chaz wants the bill to be introduced in the Senate, and so he arranged for the briefings to begin earlier, before all the other issues eclipse it.

To prepare us for the worst, ProSpace board members enacted three scenarios which we then took turns to rehearse ourselves: 1) the senator protecting NASA jobs in his home state, 2) the senator from an agricultural state who is indifferent to the issue, and 3) the senator who is extremely opposed to spending any money whatsoever on NASA. Unfortunately Case # 3 referred to Senator Kennedy. I was painfully aware of being the only legitimate Massachusetts resident in the room, so guess who would get to handle that one!! During the rehearsal, I panicked and blanked out on the details of the legislation we were promoting. Mainly it was about privatizing some of NASA's routine, near-Earth functions, and preserving allocations for the X-33 experimental launch vehicle. I dreaded the real encounters on Monday.

On Monday morning we assembled at Rayburn cafeteria on The Hill at 7:30 am and received our assignments. My team had seven appointments that day. Luckily my team-mates David Steare, a college senior majoring in Aerospace Engineering, and Frank Johnson, a first-year graduate student in Materials Science at MIT, were seasoned lobbyists. David had worked on the Hill as an intern (invited by Rohrabacher's staffer), and knew his way around the veritable labyrinth of underground passages connecting the buildings on the Hill. If the colonnaded halls and the underground trolley car had been empty of people, navigating the Hill would have been strikingly similar to solving a puzzle in *Myst*.

Compared to Sunday's rigorous training, briefing staffers was anticlimactic. Our message elicited moderate reactions ranging from indifference to mild interest in the cost-savings of privatization. I began to worry, however, whether we were not in fact giving NASA's enemies the means with which to deal the entire organization a death blow. In reality, most of us want NASA to continue the deep space, unmanned explorations. It's only the shuttle launches and the space station which could perhaps be operated more cost-effectively by private consortia. The space commercialization bill is designed to remove legislative barriers to private operators. For example, operators cannot be liable for accidents, and the law, which permits expendable vehicles to be launched, should be amended to permit reusable vehicles to reenter and land. The experimental launch vehicle program must continue to be funded in order to develop these reusable launch vehicles.

What if we pass this legislation and no companies step forward to take on NASA's routine operations? That is what Frank wondered aloud as we sat on a park bench, taking a break in the late afternoon. "We could be wrong," he observed. I babbled on about the need to take risks, more to appease myself than to answer Frank. The possibility of being trapped forever on Earth is depressing.

David, however, was enjoying the political process. He wants to keep a hand in politics for the rest of his life. He is, apparently, not an exception among ProSpacers. For example, Christopher Mallin, an attorney from Ohio staying at my hotel, is totally awed by the prospect of meeting the staffers of Congressmen and Senators (especially John Glenn!). He knows who these people are, and what they stand for. To me, they are just names I pay little attention to. On Sunday night, I had dinner with Christopher, his sister and her fiancé. The sister runs an Internet service to connect environmental activists, and her fiancé works for the National Endowment for the Arts. Unaware that I was also an artist, he said that the NEA never recruits artists to lobby the Hill because "they are too unpredictable." The "concept of an artist is a good idea," but he doesn't like artists in person.

David had spent a summer touring the Russian space program with a group of students, and he was fascinated by the relaxed Russian attitude. Unlike at NASA where rocket components are assembled with white gloves in sanitized chambers, the cash-starved Russian boosters gather dirt and dust, but nonetheless can function. David was able to go right up to a rocket launcher lying in a cart on train tracks, and touch it. Then all of a sudden there was a grinding noise, and a crane-like contraption pulled the rocket up into launch position on a bare concrete pad. It was exhilarating to be right there while it happened.

David envies Russian aerospace students because their classroom is a barn full of fighter jets and helicopters to take apart and fix. American students only interact with virtual computer models. David would like to be involved in Russian-American joint-ventures in Space.

At the debriefing dinner we turned in our 'intelligence reports': our perceptions of the staffers and their responses, and whether they had requested a copy of the bill or a briefing by a commercial company. Two ProSpace teams identified sympathetic staffers whom they thought could be recruited into ProSpace's underground membership.

On Tuesday, David Steare was reassigned and replaced by Robin Holly, a mechanical engineer from New Hampshire. Our targets were the two Kennedys, Joe and Teddy.

The first briefing went awry right from the start when Robin stepped in a pile of dog shit outside Joe Kennedy's office. When I alerted the receptionist, she replied with perfect composure that she had already called building maintenance. I looked forward to a good long break for sightseeing before the next Kennedy, but a ProSpace board member caught us lounging in the Rayburn cafeteria, and told us to make 'cold calls'. I was horrified, but resigned myself to approaching Robin's representative in New Hampshire.

Although we did not have an appointment, a staffer spared us a few minutes in the noisy hallway. She stared at us suspiciously as we gave our pitch. It was discouraging to recall how a pleasant older couple, representing something more ordinary like the American Cancer Society, stared at our name tags and pestered us with morbid fascination. After the impromptu briefing, we rushed back to 2325 Rayburn to catch the meeting with Dana Rohrabacher, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics, and Dan Goldin, the NASA administrator. Giant posters showing NASA vehicles and views of the Earth in stunning color covered all four walls.

Rohrabacher seemed positively delighted to see us. I suspect he is a closet 'Buck Rogers'. In his February press release on legislative priorities for the 105th Congress, Rohrabacher said his priority is "cheap access to space." The tone of the release indicated that ProSpace had reached him through the hand of his staffer. His senior, the Chairman of the House Science Committee, Sen. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI), also listed the early passage of a Commercial Space bill first on his list of priorities for 1997. Chaz now wants to get the attention of Sen. John McCain (R - AZ), the new Chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee. (In fact a couple of staffers asked me during briefings what McCain's position was on the bill.)

Rohrabacher began with the obligatory irreverent jokes. Recalling the good ol' days cutting funding for the NEA, he said that a furious woman screamed on the phone, "You make me so sick I could puke." With a self-satisfied grin, Rohrabacher declared: "If she put a frame around it, maybe she could sell it for a million dollars."

Then, with a sweeping gesture he introduced us to Dan Goldin. "These are the hard core," he said. "These are the real space cadets."

Dan Goldin looked ill at ease. His long face was engraved with pain. He is a target, both for conservative elements within NASA and for outspoken critics like Jerry Pournelle and G. Harry Stine. (When I asked Chaz why these two were not with us, he replied that they prefer to 'run their own show.' Stine, at least, keeps an eye on our activities.)

Goldin introduced himself with a sentimental anecdote describing the pride and awe his immigrant parents felt when Vice President Dan Quayle formally appointed him to be in charge of NASA. His father was so astonished to be in the White House, he kept touching President Bush to see if he were real. Goldin claimed to be an outsider who had accepted the position in order to "turn the space program back to the American people." Then the Clinton election dashed his hopes for NASA, his 'labor of love.'

Today, Goldin's first priority is the safety of the shuttle crew. His second is "cheap access to space" in order to have a permanent human presence in space, and bigger and better telescopes. Therefore, he wants a robust experimental space and aircraft program pushing the edge of technology. Although he did not object outright to commercialization, he insisted that private partners must be willing to risk their own capital, and in fact the choice of the X-33 was due to Lockheed's offer to risk some capital. Goldin defended the controversial space station, insisting that it had been redesigned and would be used for medical research to help shuttle pilots deal with vestibular disorientation in zero-g.

As for the station, "that's never going to be commercialized." From now on, NASA will sell—not give—the results of its science experiments and technology developments to the private sector.

As soon as the Question & Answer period began, a ProSpacer shot up his hand and proposed his pet venture. This led us down the road to the kind of technical argument which Chaz had warned us to avoid. We were supposed to forget our personal agendas and focus on the 'vision thing', but soon others were eagerly revealing their plans for space development.

One person's wish to sell asteroid data to NASA struck a raw nerve in Dan Goldin. Perhaps he disagrees with the provision in the Commercial Space Bill which authorizes NASA to buy data from private companies. He declared that the Discovery Program was NASA's vehicle for letting private companies bid for projects. The projects are chosen for their scientific merit by a committee. Goldin was sick of private companies which enter into contracts with NASA, talking of commercialization but really expecting NASA to guarantee them for all risks, absorb the capital costs and then hand over 100% of the profit. He implied that there was no role for start-up ventures in space when he explained that the trend among investment banks is to invest in incremental progress made by large established companies, not in novelties proposed by new companies without track records.

Unfortunately we argued with him, tempers flared and three ProSpacers walked out of the room in disgust.

Chaz interrupted us. "We have time for one more question," he said. "This time not about commercialization, please. Why not ask something about the X-33?"

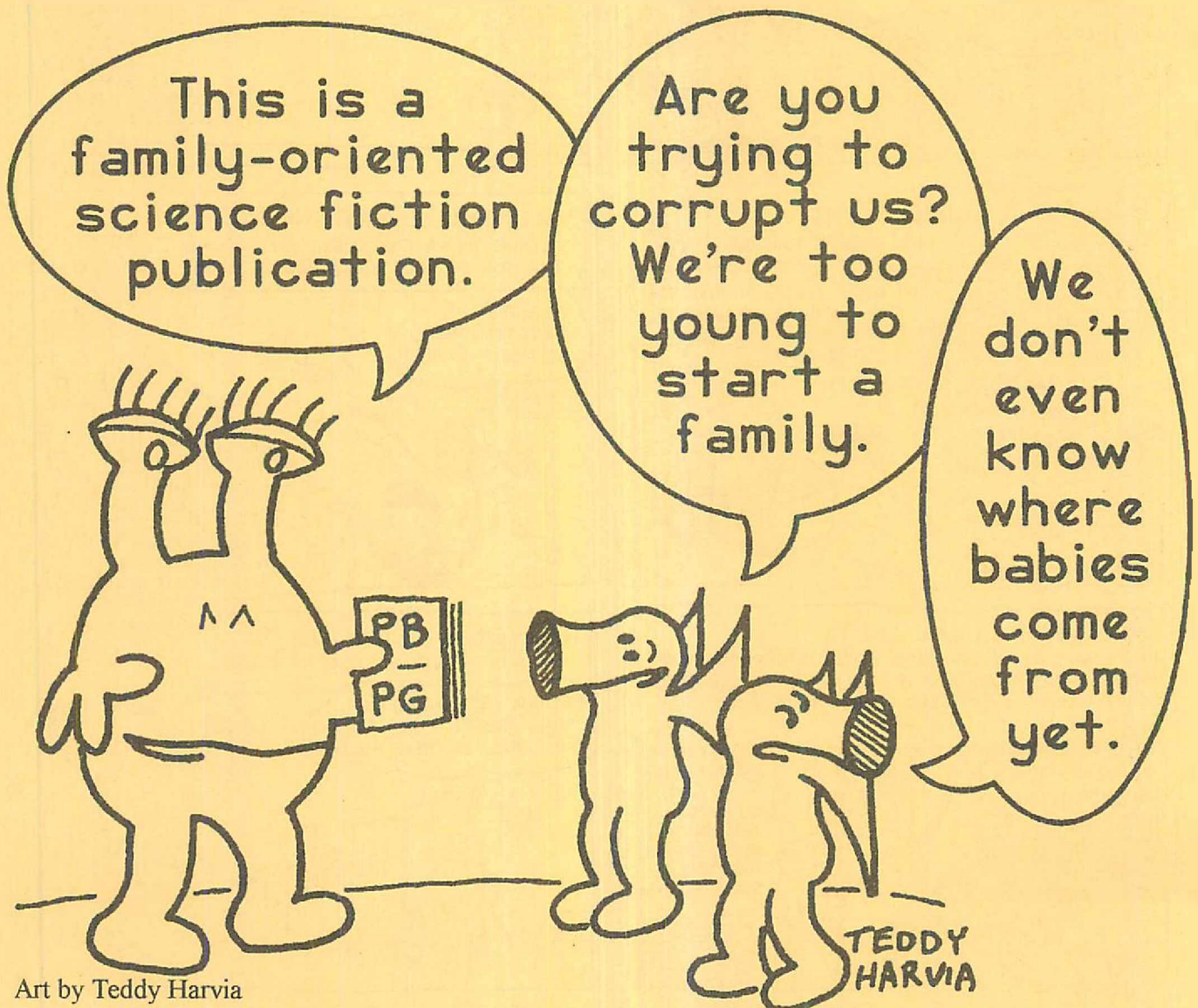
At the end of the meeting, Goldin made a feeble attempt at reconciliation by asking us whether we had seen 'The Trilogy,' meaning the re-released *Star Wars*. Rohrabacher, in contrast, seemed to be positively enjoying the adrenaline rush of conflict, and with a grin he said he knew of a NASA cover-up concerning the discovery of a bottle of gin on the moon. Unlike Goldin who left in a hurry, Rohrabacher wanted to linger, but his staffer pushed him outside so that we could regroup.

I learned a lot about managing people watching Chaz diffuse our frustration by having us talk out our feelings, but even after a pep talk, most of us were still on edge. We had not expected Dan Goldin to take the time to meet us, and so we felt like we had ruined a rare opportunity to connect with him. Chaz had warned us not to expect too much, but he had also said that although Goldin might be intimidating, he was still a public servant, and we were the public to be served. In fact, Goldin himself admitted that ProSpace was interesting because it was a grassroots effort by citizens. He told us to preserve our innocence by resisting offers of support from companies.

Frank and Robin were satisfied that Goldin had bothered to make an appearance, while I was torn by shame and anger, both understanding Goldin's predicament and realizing that he is not committed to opening space to the common people.

There's nothing like a little passion to sharpen one's speaking skills, however; during the last briefing, Senator Kennedy's staffer paid full attention to the urgency in my voice. She even thanked me at the end for coming all the way to Washington D.C. to give my opinion.

If you would like to join ProSpace, please contact Charles Miller, 1200 SpyGlass Parkway, Vallejo CA 94591. Phone: (707) 649 0225, FAX (707) 649 0227, Email: spfrontier@aol.com.



Art by Teddy Harvia

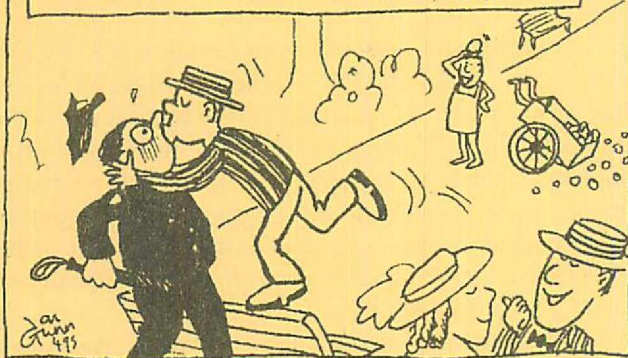
HOLLYWOOD CLICHE No. 9

ANYONE SECRETLY WATCHING SOMEONE FROM A CAR WILL ALWAYS WIND DOWN HIS WINDOW IN ORDER TO GET A BETTER LOOK.



HOLLYWOOD CLICHE No. 13

WHEN YOU'RE IN LOVE, YOU LEAP AROUND LIKE A LUNATIC. PEOPLE FIND THIS AMUSING.



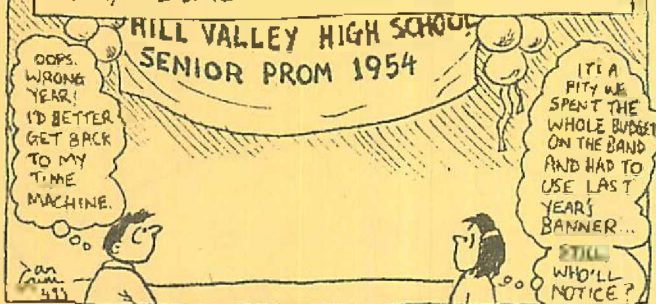
HOLLYWOOD CLICHE No. 10

DUMB, FAT, SENILE MONARCHS ALWAYS EMPLOY TALL, SINISTER, TREACHEROUS, POWER-HUNGRY, BLACK-BEARDED SORCERERS AS ADVISORS.



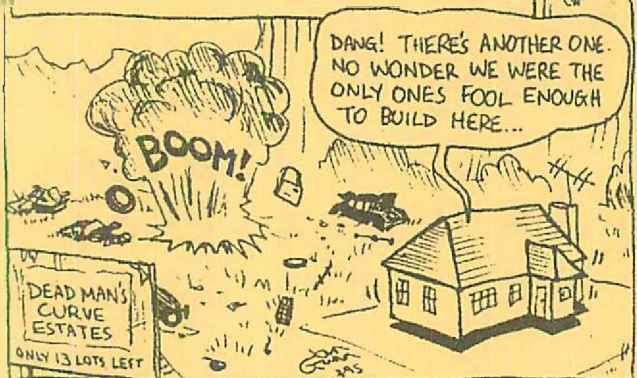
HOLLYWOOD CLICHE No. 14

ANY DANCE OR SOCIAL EVENT WILL HAVE A HUGE BANNER INSIDE THE HALL INFORMING PARTICIPANTS THE NAME OF THE EVENT AND, IF IT'S AN HISTORICAL FILM, THE DATE.



HOLLYWOOD CLICHE No. 11

CARS FALLING OFF CLIFFS ALWAYS EXPLODE.



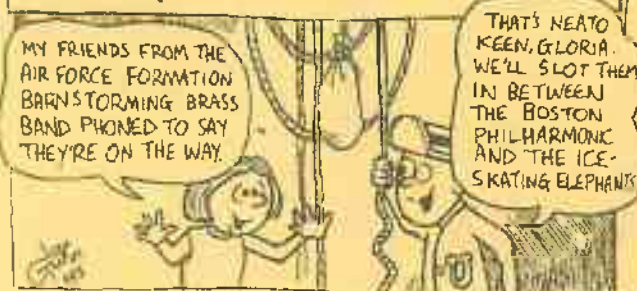
HOLLYWOOD CLICHE No. 15

VILLAINS BEING PURSUED WILL ALWAYS CLIMB TO THE TOP OF TALL BUILDINGS, THEN FALL TO THEIR DEATH.



HOLLYWOOD CLICHE No. 12

ANY GROUP OF UNEMPLOYED ENTERTAINERS RAISING MONEY FOR AN ORPHANAGE WILL PUT ON THE MOST SPECTACULAR BIG BUDGET MUSICAL BROADWAY HAS EVER SEEN.



HOLLYWOOD CLICHE No. 16

GIANTS MOVE IN SLOW MOTION



Wiscon 20 Opening Ceremonies Script

By Tracy Benton and Bill Bodden
Illustrated by Joe Mayhew

Editor's note: This script was written for Wiscon 20 in 1997. I apologize for the delay in printing it, but it's still amusing, and an interesting recap of the history of fandom in Wisconsin (and feminism).

Cast: Narrators, Tracy Benton and Bill Bodden; Denise, Jeanne; Marsha, Ellen; Elizabeth, Meg; John, Scott; Alan, Andy; Paul, Greg; Pat Murphy, Jeanne; Big Shot, Ellen; Neo, Scott; Chip, Andy.

Tracy Good evening. I'd like to welcome you to Wiscon 20. Thank you all for coming. This is a really special year for us: besides being our twentieth convention, we also have attendees here from around the globe. My esteemed colleague Bill has prepared a special welcome for everyone in their native tongues. Ready, Bill?

Bill *(Shuffling through papers)*

Tracy Ready, Bill?

Bill *(Gestures; perhaps a nice shrug.)* Okay.

Tracy For the Canadians:

Bill Welcome to Wiscon 20, eh. It's about time you got here.

Tracy For the Argentineans:

Bill Hi, Gabriella.

Tracy Uh, for the...French:

Bill *(pause)* Elcome-way oo-tay iscon-Way.

Tracy *(Looking down, covering eyes in embarrassment)* For the Japanese:

Bill

Tracy *(doubletake with gaping mouth)*

Bill And for our guests from Australia and England, the pub's downstairs!

Tracy You know, Bill and I have worked on a couple Wiscon opening ceremonies, and we wanted to make this one an event to remember. We wanted to have some eyepopping special effects, but LucasFilm wouldn't return our calls. Then we considered a huge Busby Berkeley-style production number, but the ceiling in here isn't high enough for the giant neon rotating stairs.

So instead, we'd like to present a few scenes from Wiscon's past.

Bill And now, the obligatory disclaimer: the scenes you are about to witness have been recreated, and, in places, altered slightly for dramatic effect. If you were there—

Tracy —and you know who you are—

Bill —and you remember things differently...your check is in the mail.

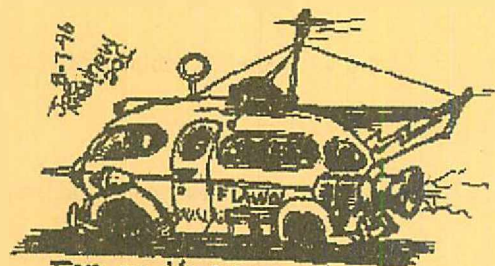
Tracy We'd like you to cast your mind back now, if you can, to 1976. Remember 1976?

Bill Back when cigarette ads were as common as leisure suits.

Tracy Back when you could buy an Olds Cutlass Supreme for \$6000.



- Bill Back when a couple of obscure films were destined to get a few people's attention: *Star Wars*, and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. **Although**, the next year would produce a film to eclipse them both: the landmark epic of SF cinema...*The Cat from Outer Space*!
- Tracy Luckily, I can't remember that. But some people might have heard about a conversation that happened after MidAmericon that year it went something like this:
- Denise Wow, our first Worldcon. That was great.
- Marsha I couldn't believe how many people were there! I'm going to go to next year's, too, if I can afford it. What was your favorite part?
- Denise No contest. Susan Wood's panel on feminist issues in SF. Even though I had to sit way in the back, it was fantastic.
- Marsha I wish we'd had more time! They could have given that panel three hours, and it still wouldn't have been enough. And you know what I heard? They didn't want to let her do that panel.
- Denise What? Why not?
- Marsha "Not enough interest." Famous last words! Do you think other conventions have panels like that?
- Denise If they don't, they certainly ought to. Think of the authors they could be discussing...Joanna Russ, Vonda McIntyre...
- Marsha And Joan Vinge, and Le Guin... You know, I bet we could do it!
- Denise Do what?
- Marsha We could have our own convention! I bet we could have it on campus!
- Denise Could we? I bet we could get at least a hundred people. But we don't know anything about running a convention.
- Marsha Well, we've just been to one, so we know what to have. Let's see, conventions have about ten tracks of programming, a big dance...
- Denise A costume contest, an art show...
- Marsha A dealer's room selling stuff, a big hospitality room...
- Denise And guests of honor! We could invite feminist SF authors! Wouldn't it be cool if we could get Ursula K. Le Guin to come?
- Marsha Well...maybe not for our first convention...but maybe one day! Let's see who we can talk into helping us on this!
- Denise But what should we call it?
- Marsha Oh, we'll think of something later. It'll be something classy, and thought-provoking! And completely-unique!
- Denise How about "Wiscon?"
- Marsha (pause) Nahh, I don't like it. We'll think of something better.
- Bill And the rest is history.
- Tracy So the first Wiscon was held at the Wisconsin Center on the UW campus in February of 1977 with guests of honor Katherine MacLean and Amanda Bankier.



Fen on their way to
the 1934 Worldcon.

Bill 276 people paid \$4 in advance—or \$6 at the door—to get in. They enjoyed unusually balmy weather over the weekend, with temperatures in the 40's. And afterward, they came to a momentous decision:

Denise Let's do it again next year!
and Marsha

- Bill In its first five years, Wiscon members saw classic panels like the Madison Parade of Dead Cats come and go.
- Tracy And the convention committee had memorable experiences like taking author Octavia Butler to the airport after a blizzard...and running out of gas on the way there.
- Bill And so Wiscon marched on. The convention committee prepared for Wiscon number 6, to be held in March of 1982 and featuring Suzette Haden Elgin and Terry Carr as guests of honor.
- Tracy The convention by this time had grown to over 400 attendees and moved to the Inn on the Park, where the committee planned to collect \$15 at the door for admission.
- Bill Ahh...1982. An Inn on the Park room cost only \$35 a night.
- Tracy You could buy an Atari computer with a whopping 32K of memory for only \$800.
- Bill You could wonder who shot J. R..
- Tracy Ah, the days of our youth.
- Bill and Tracy *(big sigh)*
- Bill But the greatest thing about the early eighties was...the movies! You could spend just \$3.50 to see *Beastmaster*, *Bladerunner*, *Wrath of Khan*, *Conan the Barbarian*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*, *Brother from Another Planet*, *Android*, *Clash of the Titans*, *The Dark Crystal*, *Dragonslayer*, *E. T. the Extraterrestrial*, *Excalibur*, *Flash Gordon*, *Liquid Sky*, *The Road Warrior*, *Outland*, *Superman II*, or *Ator: the Fighting Eagle*...just to name a few! *(He slumps over, panting)*
- Tracy Do you need oxygen, or anything?
- Bill *(gestures to go on, he's okay)*
- Tracy By this time, preparing for Wiscon had fallen into second nature for the convention committee. To give you an idea of how a Wiscon comes together, we present a typical Wiscon meeting and please remember: the names have been changed to protect the innocent.
- ALL but Denise *(rhubarb, rhubarb, mumble, mutter, argue, etc.)*
- Denise *(frazzled but staying calm)* Okay, already, we're at the 3-hour mark in this meeting. Could we PLEASE move on to the next topic? On the agenda, I see...
- Paul *(interrupts)* Wait! Wait a minute. We still have a motion on the floor. We have to vote on it before we go on.
- Others *(loud groan)*
- Denise *(sigh)* Okay, I'm sorry. What IS the motion on the floor? I don't remember.
- Paul Well, Alan moved that future Guests of Honor should be elected by first submitting a paragraph of 100 words or less in support of your nomination, and then all persons who have attended at least 3 Wiscon meetings in the last year may vote by ranking the nominees from 1 to 10.

Marsha Excuse me! Do you mean that the person you rank highest gets the 10, or the person you rank lowest gets the 10?

Alan I meant that the highest gets the 10, and then we'll add up the points.

John Oh, but we should be doing this by Australian ballot. Then it's the other way. The person you like most gets the 1.

Paul That would be an amendment to the motion. First we have to vote on the motion.

Alan No, no, that's okay, I'll accept that as a friendly amendment.

Denise But then who's going to figure out this Australian ballot thing? I'm not gonna do it!

John That's okay. I can write a computer program that will crunch the numbers for us.

Denise Okay, okay, let's vote then.

Marsha Wait! What are we voting on again?

Paul The motion on the floor is that future Guests of Honor should be elected by first submitting a paragraph of 100 words or less in support of your nomination, and then all persons who have attended at least 3 Wiscon meetings in the last year may vote by ranking the nominees from 1 to 10. Then this was amended to say that the highest rank is 1 and the lowest 10, and the winner to be determined by Australian ballot.

Denise Right! All those in favor, say "aye."

Alan AYE!
and John

Denise Those opposed?

Marsha NAY!
and Paul

Denise Elizabeth, why didn't you vote?

Elizabeth *(pause)* Um...what's an Australian ballot?

ALL but *(slap hand to head in exasperation)*
Elizabeth

Bill Let us draw the curtain on this tragic scene...

Tracy Despite the hair-tearing and personality clashes in the Wiscon con-com, these people, hard as it may be to believe, all still liked each other. And even more than they liked each other, they liked putting on Wiscon.

Bill So Wiscon kept happening. It had its ups and downs. A definite "up" might be considered Jessica Amanda Salmonson's hilarious guest of honor speech at Wiscon 8...

Tracy And under a category of "down," perhaps we could consider this unfortunate incident at a Wiscon 11 information desk:

NEO Yes, can I help you?

chip Well, I seem to have misplaced my pocket program. Could I have another one?

NEO Certainly. We're selling them for fifty cents.



- Chip Harm, I don't actually have my wallet with me. I'm on a panel soon, though, and I need to know where it is, so could I...
- NEO (*priggishly*) I'm very sorry, but you know, it does cost us money to print these, and everybody's always losing theirs, or leaving it in their hotel rooms, so this year, we made a policy, and we're sticking to it.
- Chip Oh, I see. Well, perhaps you'd just let me...
- Big shot Excuse me, is there a problem here?
- NEO This gentleman is looking for another pocket program, and...
- Big shot Oh! Ah, here you go, Mr. Delaney. Um, I really enjoyed your panel on writing modern fantasy. I think your next panel is down the hall on your left, there.
- Chip Thanks!
- NEO Delaney??? Ohhh, no...
- Bill The young fan did eventually recover from the terrible trauma, but it did take several years of intensive counseling.
- Tracy We jump ahead in time now to 1989, the year of Wiscon lucky number 13. By this time we'd been forced to move out of the downtown area to the far southeast side Holiday Inn.
- Bill That hotel, as you may recall, was notable mainly for its friendly staff and the swallows which flew in and out of the dealers' room.
- Tracy 1989 was an oddly appropriate year for Wiscon number 13. That same year saw the election of David Duke to public office in Louisiana, not to mention the *Exxon Valdez* disaster in Alaska.
- Bill And the movies that year were terrible! Just terrible!
- Tracy The convention committee was undergoing some changes, too, as more new blood filtered in. Meetings kept spinning like clockwork. Let's attend another typical Wiscon meeting.
- Bill In this case, the names have been changed to protect the guilty!
- Paul Okay, great! We wrapped that up. We're now only at the 2-hour mark in the meeting, and I think we should all offer a big "thank you" to Elizabeth for stepping in—at the last minute—to take over the Publications department without any prior experience. (*applauds*)
- OTHERS (*all applaud*)
- Paul Elizabeth, do you have anything you want to report just yet?
- Elizabeth Um...well things are going okay, I guess. But I do have a couple of things I want to ask about the program book. The text is all entered in my Lisa computer at home, and I've started to lay it out. But I'm not sure if I'm supposed to do this 8 1/2 by 11 or whether it would be better to use 5 1/2 by 7. So I thought maybe it would be good to hear what all of you thought so could we like, vote on it, or something?
- Marsha Oh, well, I think 8 1/2 by 11 just looks so unprofessional. I mean, it makes it look like a fan publication or something.
- Alan (*with ire*) Well, it IS a fan publication!
- John But, you know, I think the advertisers like it better when it's 8 1/2 by 11. Because then their full page ads are bigger.

Elizabeth Ads? What ads? Where do the ads come from?

Paul Oh, ah, don't worry about that. It's pretty much too late to sell ads anyway.

Alan *(kindly)* Look, Liz, it's not that big a deal. Why don't you lay out a couple pages and see what looks better? Then you can let us know what you picked out.

Marsha But this is kind of important! The program book is the one thing that everyone takes home with them to remember our convention by! We have to present a dignified, professional image! I'd like to make a motion!

Alan Yeah, well, I got your motion right here, buddy!

Paul HOLD IT! Elizabeth, don't worry about all this. I'm sure that whatever you pick will be fine. Let me know if you need any help.

Elizabeth *(nervously)* Well, okay. But I did have one other thing...

Paul *(calmly)* Go ahead.

Elizabeth I'm wondering what I should do about the badges?

Paul *(slowly)* What about the badges?

Elizabeth What color should they be?

Marsha *(quickly)* Red.

Denise No, purple.

Marsha Definitely red. They're easy for the badgers to spot, and red is very difficult to copy, so we'll have to worry less about badge forging.

Denise But they OUGHT to be purple, because purple is a feminist color. It makes a statement!

Paul Okay, hold it, hold it! Look, why don't the two of you meet with Elizabeth outside the meeting and help her pick out the card stock. Okay?

Marsha Okay.
and Denise

Paul Okay with you, Elizabeth?

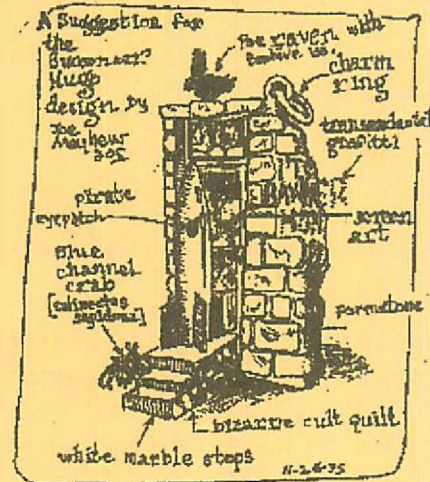
Elizabeth Oh, yes, that would be fine.

Alan *(sarcastically)* Yes, I think that's a wonderful idea. They can help you collate all 700 program books then, too. That works out just great!

Marsha Umm.../ Ahhh...
and Denise

Tracy At least it's easy to see that they never lost their passion for the convention!

Bill And the next six years didn't see it abate much, either. Of course, a large part of the credit for that goes to Pat Murphy and Karen Joy Fowler and their creation of the Tiptree award. It lit a bonfire of enthusiasm in the Madison fan group. Many of you may remember Wiscon 15 in 1991, when Pat Murphy's guest of honor speech dropped this bombshell:



"Pat Murphy" And so I would like to announce the creation of the James Tiptree, Jr. Memorial Award, to be presented annually to a fictional work that explores and expands the roles of women and men. We're still in the planning stages, but we plan to appoint a panel of five judges and we plan to finance the award—and this is another stroke of genius on Karen's part—through bake sales. If you want to volunteer to run a bake sale, talk to me after the speech.

Elizabeth Wow! What wonderful news!

Marsha This award is going to get a lot of media attention. Some really great fiction is going to get put on the map!

Elizabeth And this idea about bake sales is good, too. We could have bake sales. I'll host one at Worldcon.

Marsha I'm going to Disclave this spring, I could have one there. We should print up some flyers!

Elizabeth And you know what would be ideal? A cookbook! And we could call it, "The Bakery Men Don't See!"

Bill So imagine their Surprise when Pat Murphy revealed, a mere 12 months and several thousands of dollars later:

"Pat Murphy" You know that thing about the bake sales? Well, that was sort of a joke.

Elizabeth *(Long pause and stare at "Pat")*
and Marsha

Elizabeth *(irony)* But Pat...we're feminists!

Marsha *(even more irony)* We don't **have** a sense of humor!

Tracy While the Tiptree was born here in Madison, it did fly off on its own to be presented at some other conventions. But it was destined to come back to Wiscon, just as Wiscon was destined to return to downtown Madison.

Bill We take you now to a fairly typical party in Madison fandom. And this time, the facts have been changed to make a better story.

Denise Hi! Come on in! Happy New Year!

John Happy New Year! Sorry we're so late.

Marsha The roads were just terrible. You wouldn't believe it.

Denise Don't worry, you're the first to arrive. Oh, is that home-brew? Put it in the cooler on the porch...

John Yes, and I brought all my leftover Christmas cookies, too. I'll put them on the table.

Marsha And I brought four cheesecakes! I hope people will be hungry!

Denise How nice...look, it's Elizabeth and Alan!

Elizabeth Hi, Happy New Year. I'm sorry we're late.

Alan The roads...

Denise Yeah, I know, they're terrible. I'm glad you made it. Oh good, more Christmas cookies.

Alan And I brought a cheesecake.

Denise Okay, ah, if you can find some room on the table...maybe the kitchen counter?

Paul Hi, sorry I'm late. Sure was fun driving over in all this snow!

Denise Hey, great to see you! Hope you didn't bring a cheesecake!

Paul *(very seriously)* I can't eat cheesecake.

Denise Oh, er, have a beer. Or there's soda in the red cooler. Oh, there's Judy and Helen coming up the driveway, I better go open the door.

Elizabeth So, John, I haven't seen you in a while! What have you been up to lately?

John Oh, well, you know, Christmas holiday stuff with the folks. The usual...I **have** started to lay out the pocket program a little bit.

Elizabeth Oh, really? Tell me about it. That will have an impact on scheduling, you know.

John Well, I want to use these special symbols to indicate which program items we feminist in nature, which have the guests of honor, which are media, which are science panels, which are fannish...

Elizabeth Doesn't that sound a little too detailed?

John No, it's going to be very easy for people to figure out. People are symbol-oriented!

Elizabeth Oh, well we mustn't turn this party into a Wiscon meeting, now! I'm so tired of that joke about how Madison fan parties always turn into meetings!

Alan What are you two doing over here, having a meeting or something?

John No, no, nothing like that. So what's new with you?

Alan Well, I've been meeting with a guy at the Concourse. He seems to think we'd be welcome back there.

John What? I thought they liked the high school wrestlers better than us! They buy more drinks in the bar, anyway.

Alan Well, we wouldn't be in on the same weekend as the wrestlers. In fact, we'd miss all the March Madness tournaments.

Marsha What's this? The Concourse? Would we have to go in January or something?

Alan Actually, there's a very attractive date open in May. What do you think of Memorial Day weekend?

Elizabeth Think about it! A four day weekend, beautiful weather, the farmer's market, lots of restaurants...people would love it!

Marsha Yeah...no more driving through thick fog banks to get the guests of honor from the airport...and no blizzards, either.

John Gosh, we'd have room for all those great programming ideas with an extra day to spread it out over.

Alan We have to move quickly on this, though, because we could lose the date any time. Say...you know what? We have a quorum of the committee here! We could just decide now and get it over with! Then I could talk to the guy at the Concourse right away on Monday. We just need Paul. Hey, Paul, Paul, come here a minute!

Marsha Shhh...not so loud! Denise will kill us for having a meeting at her party! You know she hates that!

Paul What's up?

Alan With you here, we have a quorum of the committee. We need to decide something quickly. We can reserve Memorial Day weekend at the Concourse if we vote to do it now.

Paul Well, that sounds nice, but the rest of the committee should have been informed if you planned on having a meeting here.

Elizabeth This isn't a meeting. It's just a quick vote.

Paul Well, but I don't have any paper to take minutes on, or anything.

Alan That's okay, don't worry about it. Look, should we go to the Concourse in May or what?

John I vote yes. Marsha?

Marsha Yes for me too. Let's get out of Winter Wonderland.

Paul Now, hold it...

Elizabeth I vote yes, too. It'll be so nice to be back downtown again.

Alan And I vote yes. So, Paul...

Paul Now just wait a minute! If this is going to be a vote, it needs to be official. We don't even have a motion on the floor.

Alan Yes, we do, you heard me.

Marsha And I seconded it. You just missed that part. So we're all set.

Paul But what about discussion?

John Been there.

Elizabeth Done that.

Paul But then...

Alan Paul, are you in favor or not?

Paul Well, yes.

Alan Then it's unanimous! I'll talk to the Concourse this week!

Denise Hey, you guys better not be having a meeting at MY party!

Conspirators Oh...ah...er...no...not us. We're not having a meeting! We wouldn't do that!

Marsha *(stage whisper)* Whew, that was close. I move we adjourn!

John *(also a loud whisper)* I second.

Paul But...but...

Alan I hope you don't have a problem with this, Paul.

Paul Well, no, it's just that...

Elizabeth Yes?

Paul A motion to adjourn needs no second!

All but Paul *(look at Paul mutely; long pause)*



The End...?

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Framingham, MA

February 12-14, 1999



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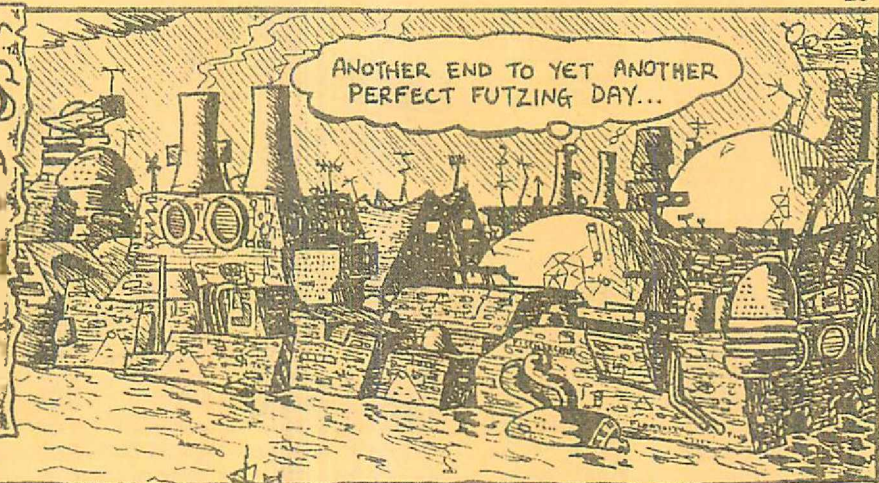
Mail to: Boskone 36, P.O. Box 809, Framingham, MA 01701-0809 USA

SPACE TIME BY JON GRUM

Buccaneers

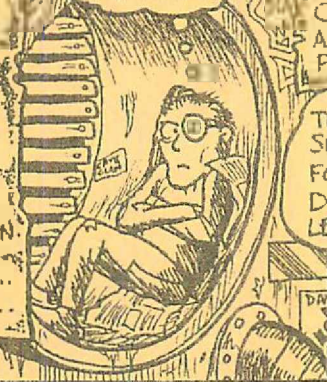
ORIGINS (1) FEEDBACK DATA

INPUT BEGINS: THE PLACE IS FLOATCITY FIVE. HOME TO A MILLION OR TWO MEN, FEM, AND CONSTRUCTS, ME INCLUDED. SOMEWHERE OFF THE COAST OF FRISCO AND DRIFTING WEST. THE YEAR MUST'VE BEEN 2132, COZ I'D JUST TWENTYFIED. NOT A GOOD BIRTHDAY...



THREE WEEKS PREVE, I WAS A TEENER WITH A FUTURE. MINIMAL DEBTS. THIRD SHARE IN A HABIDORM. ALL IMPLANTS PAID OFF. LEAD ZEETARIST IN THE UPINCOMINEST RAGGAMALAY TEKBAK BAND IN THE WHOLE RAFT... UNTIL THAT FUTZING LOSER OF A TONEDECK JOCKEY GOT HIMSELF TRAWLED FOR ILLEGAL BRAINWIPE POSSESSION. HE GOT STASIS-REHABBED. I GOT JOBLESS... EVICTED... HAD TO SELL THE ZEETAR...

NET, I'M HUNGRY!



NO HOME. NO CRED. NON GRATA WITH EMPLOYDEPT. SELF WORTH ZERO. FUTURE ZERO. HEALTH ON DOWNSLIDE. ASSETS: THE CLOTHES AND ORGANS I STAND IN, AN OBSOLETE HITACHI ARM, LAST SEASON'S EYE SYSTEM AND A CHEAP PIRATED MUSICAL SKILL BIOCHIP...

THE EVENING DINERS SHOULD BE AT THE FOODMALL. TIME TO DUMPSTERDIVE FOR LEFTOVER KRILLKEBABS.



SUDDENLY, I SERENDIPPED ONE OF OUR OLD POSTERS. I HAD TO SOUVENIR IT.

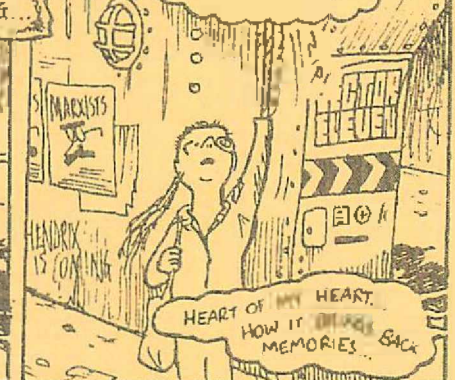


THE DELAY WAS FORTUNATE. IT MADE ME MISS CROSSING PATHS WITH A NIGHTGANG...

OH, FUTZ. I DON'T NEED THIS...



TIME TO GET SCARCE...



A QUARTET OF BARBERS. NOT THE MOST DANGEROUS OF FAD GROUPS ON THE RAFT, BUT UP THERE WITH THE LOONIEST. THEY USUALLY PICKED ON YUPS, TRENDODS AND UPPERMIDS BUT I WASN'T CHANCING.



THEY'D ALREADY FOUND A VICTIM...

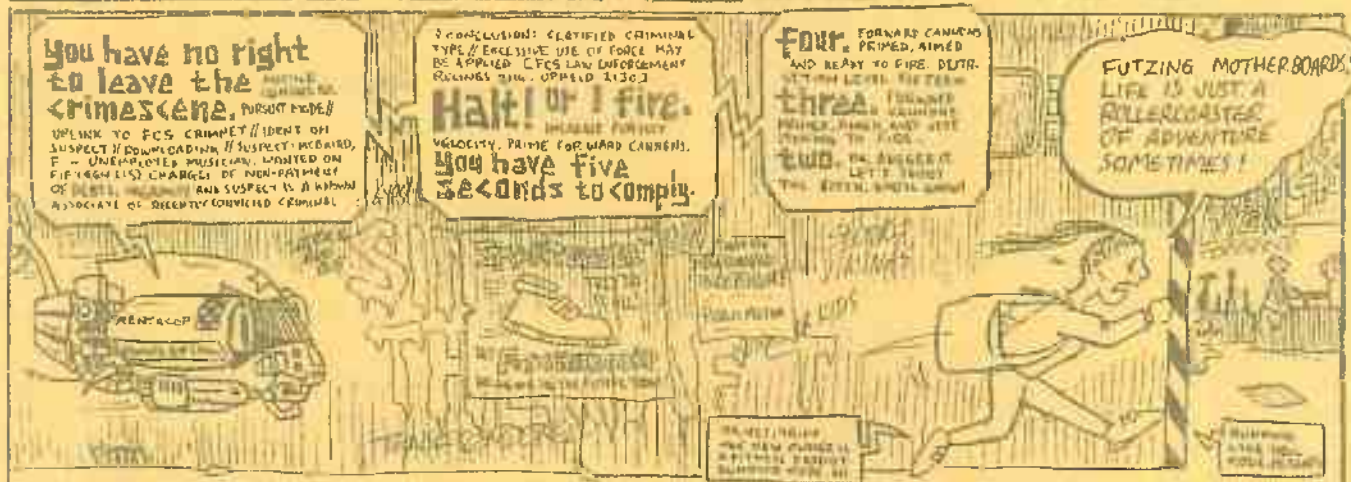
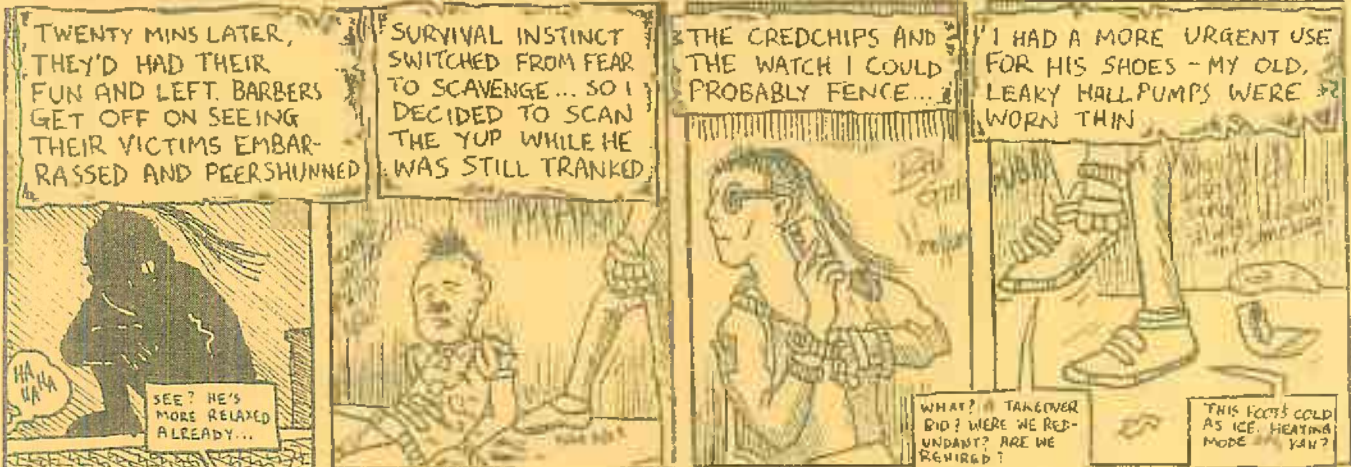
ON THE CORNER OF THE STREET...

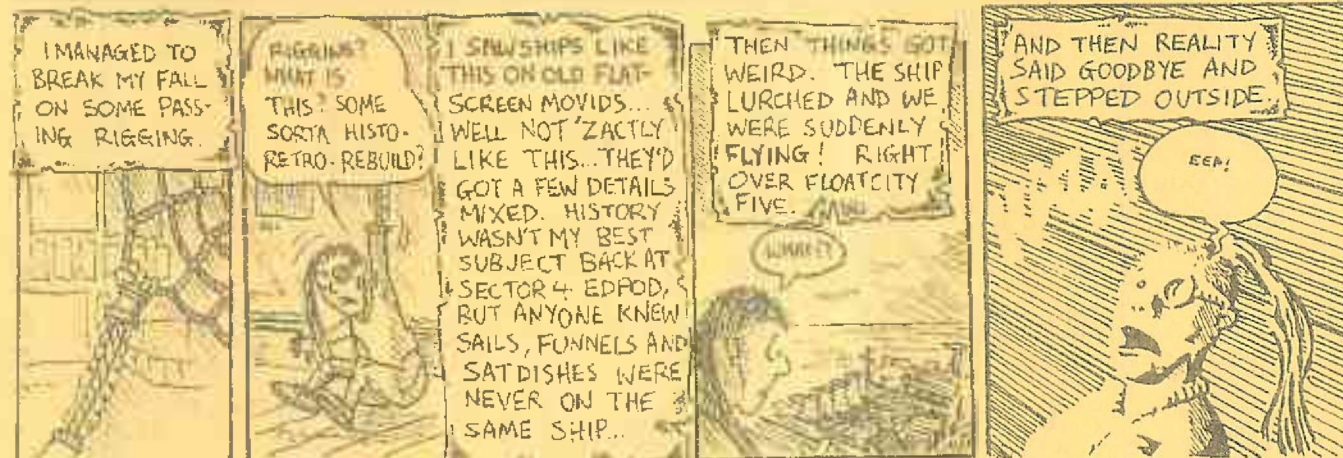
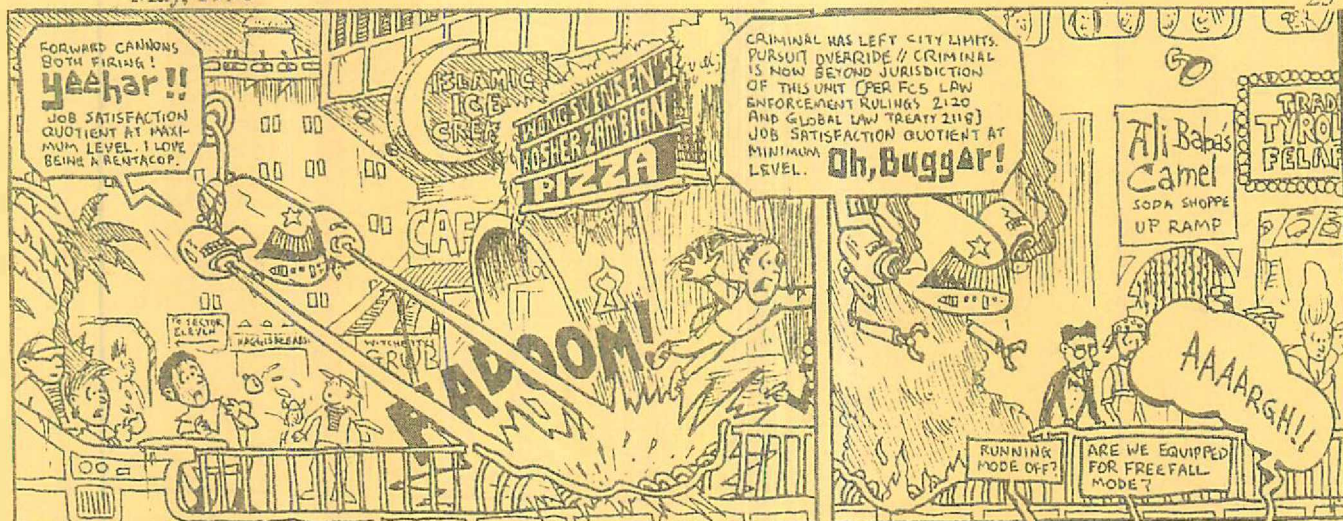
WH-WHAT DO YOU WANT? MONEY? TAKE IT!

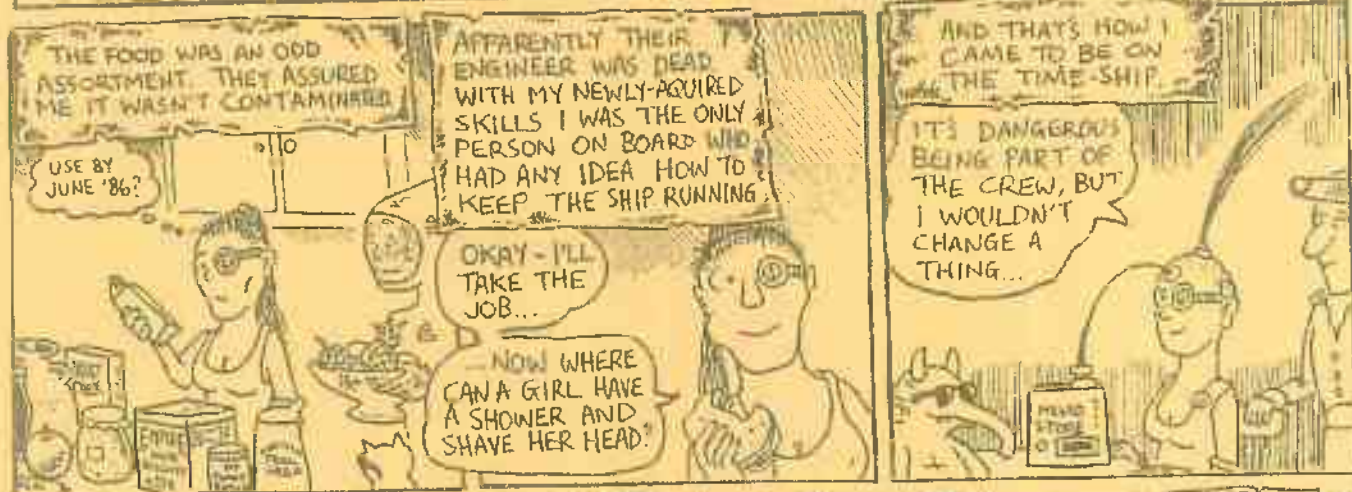
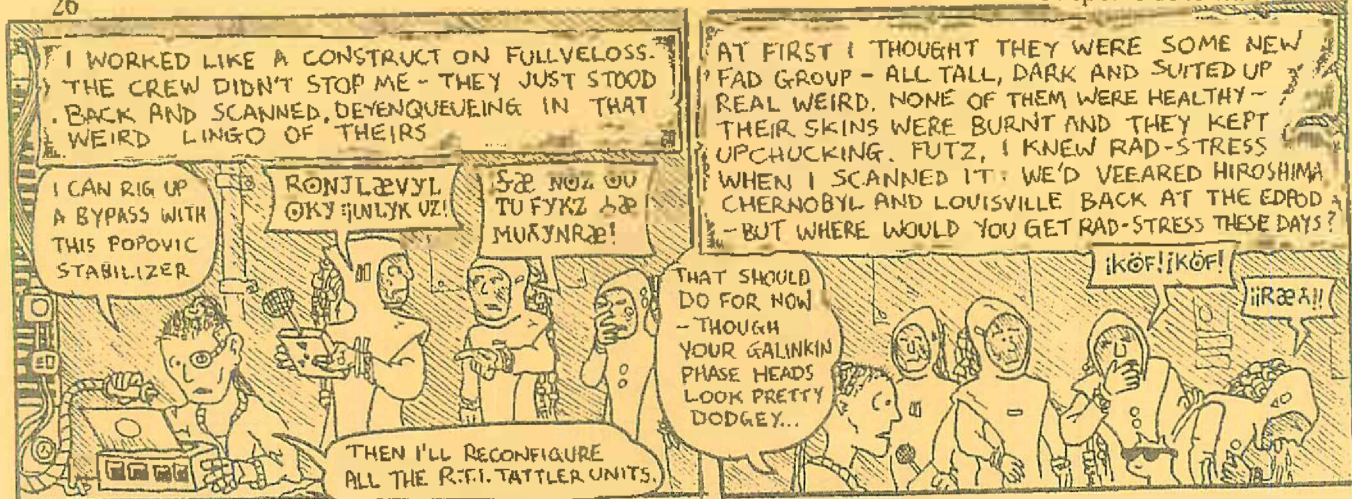


NO! NO! NOT THE HAIR! ANYTHING BUT THE HAIR!









COURSE, I HAD NO IDEA THAT MY EVERY MOVE WAS BEING WATCHED FROM A NEARBY DIMENSION.

THE NEW TRAVELLER IS ONE FEEDBACK McBAIRD. RECORDS SHOW SHE WOULD HAVE SOON DIED IN OBSCURITY. HER DEPARTURE FROM THE TWENTY-SECOND CENTURY WILL NOT AFFECT OUR OWN TIME-LINE...



SHE HAS NO KNOWN TECHNICAL SKILLS. WITH THE REST OF THE CREW DYING FROM RADIATION EXPOSURE, THE SHIP WILL EVENTUALLY BECOME INOPERATIVE.

...AND THEY WEREN'T THE ONLY ONES...

EVERYTHING IS GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN...

... ONLY SIX MORE TO FIND...



INPUT ENDS.

Letters of Comment

Jan. 11, 1998

Hello:

No one there may have ever heard of me. I have been floating around SF fandom for 6 or 8 years, primarily letter-hacking. I have always been somewhat confused by 'the usual' and have also had some problems with it, considering it to be a misleading term.

Recently I have begun a sort of project to explore the boundaries of that term somewhat as well as to, hopefully, expand my SFzine reading a bit. As a form of research, I asked Lloyd Penney for some recommendations. You, and *Proper Boskonian*, was one. I believe that I have heard that my pal Gene Stewart, who describes me as 'inestimable' (I have no idea if he meant it as a compliment or a complaint), contributes to you.

Anyway, I hereby request a copy or more of *Proper Boskonian*. Should you send one or more issues, I guarantee a LoC within a month of receipt. Following that, it shall be completely your decision whether you keep me on your mailing list or not.

I live by a few rules. One is that I answer all letters received. One is that I write some sort of comment to almost all fanzines I receive, with very few exceptions. One is that I only read what interests me. Another is that if a fanzine does not interest me much, I say so. LoCs range from very short to too long (12 pages once, to *FOSEAX*). It's very rare for me not to LoC a zine received.

Sometimes, I write things and submit them. *FOSEAX* and *Twink* have been the beneficiaries (grin) of this lately.

I don't know what I will do with the project or the results. Probably just include them in LoCs here and there.

If you would like to see my writing:

I have restarted doing a column in *Drift*. A few bucks or a handful of (Canadian) stamps to C. F. Kennedy, Box 40, 90 Shuter St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5B 2K6.

People interested in music reviews...\$2 for an issue or \$6 U.S. for a year's supply to Jim Testa, Jersey Beat, 418 Gregory Ave., Weehawken NJ 07087. Column plus other reviews by me.

FOSEAX is basically bi-monthly, thick, smallish print and oriented towards sf, politics, abortions and sf conventions. The folks there so far have published about 85% of my submissions plus large amounts of LoCs. Available by sub but I suggest sending \$3 US to *FOSEAX*, PO Box 37281, Louisville KY 40233 for a sample copy.

Dan Lennard says he is going to continue Betty Paginated. Don't expect more than 2 issues a year, if that. If it is still a go, I expect to have some reviews in future issues. Be aware that there are lots of picture of naked chicks: swearing and substantial wrestling chatter. Helen Vnuk usually contributes an article or two, which makes the \$3 US worthwhile. PO Box A1412, Sydney South, NSW 1235, Australia. Not to denigrate Dan's writing.

Twink has published a couple of things by me. The pseudonymous publisher and I seem to be at odds over what they were. I don't think it's readily available. Various SFzines publish LoCs. If you are interested in obtaining copies of the same, drop me a line. I may submit some writings to other publishers.

I am on the outlook for review outlets. I wish I could find a publisher who would provide zines and books to review. Someday.

I am interested in obtaining wrestling publications which my good and generous friend Vic does not provide. Preferably in batches and preferably in trade for zines and/or CDs. If interested, please write, stating what you can supply and what you want.

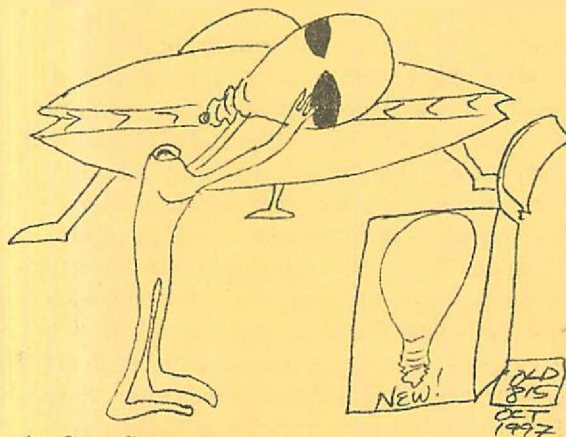
Also please note that one of my proposed projects for 1998 involves researching the limits of "the usual". Some of you will be aware that I dislike the term and believe it obligates the publisher to send a copy of his/her/their fanzine to anyone who writes requesting a copy and promising a letter of comment. Or at least a note explaining why no zine is being sent. I considered a form letter thing and/or including it in this but I think a personal letter is the proper approach. Who knows what will happen to this project? If I send out 40 requests, how many fanzines will I receive?

A request for correspondents: if you would like to see this project go, and the results, please send me some recommendations of fanzines you get but I don't, whose publishers you believe would respond to my requests.

Thanks for your time.

Rodney Leighton

["The usual" is, as I understand it, any sort of submission—letters, art, articles, and reasonable requests. Or my whim, as I state quite clearly on the title page. I hope you enjoyed PB 42, and I look forward to further submissions of all sorts from you. —The Editor.]



Art by Gene Stewart

Letters of Comment

January 17, 1998

Dear Lisa,

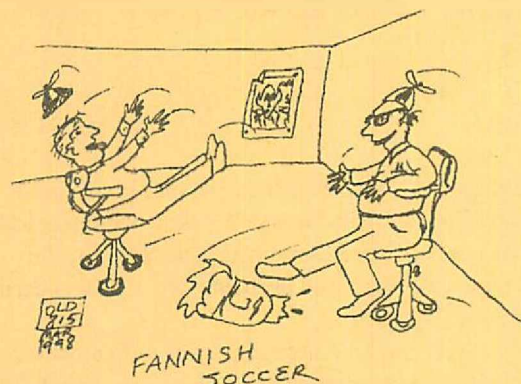
How interesting—you printed my LoC on *PB #40* in both *PB #41* and *PB #42*. Really, I do not usually repeat myself as much as that reprinting might have some people thinking. Also, I do hope that you can find my LoC on *PB #41* as I do not have a copy to resend to you. Is it no fun being a faned? Well, whilst we are awaiting your finding of my real LoC on *PB #41*, let us move on to some commentary on *PB #42*.

Let me start with a few comments about Evelyn Leeper's con report. Starting with her report on the panel on Recent Classic SF/F Novels. Firstly, I must say that finances in recent decades have kept me from reading all that much new SF—I do have this quirk of preferring to own the SF I read, building my own library. Still, and secondly, I do not even remember hearing of most of the books mentioned by David Hartwell and Patrick Nielsen Hayden. In my collection I have *The Stars My Destination*, *The Demolished Man*, *Slan*, *Beyond This Horizon*, *Ender's Game*, and *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. I have heard of *Neuromancer* and *Guns of the South* but I have not read them. I have read many new novels printed in this decade; but of the works listed in the report which I have not mentioned by me as having been read by me, the only one of the authors mentioned who has a book in my library is Octavia Butler (as represented by *Dawn*). As I have some 2200+ books in the SF portion of my library, I do believe that I have enough knowledge/experience in SF to sometimes contribute informed commentary to the topic. At this point (and in this area) I feel that the use of the "classic" in SF should be reserved for work which is at least more than 3 seconds old. I do not like to get in discussions about "which is better than what", I usually prefer to try to reach a consensus as to what is good and leave it at that; as, once one is above a certain quality level, the concept of *best* is entirely a subjective opinion. Whilst I am usually uncomfortable trying to define any given work as a "classic", the work that I, personally, can always point to is *Mission of Gravity*.

On a somewhat related subject, *A Canticle for Leibowitz* was mentioned in the panel on Religion in SF. My subjective view of the book was "good" when I first read it (soon after it was released) and a downgraded view of "interesting" after a recent re-reading of it.

In the panel on Will Reading and Writing Survive Another 100 years I have some views contrary to some of what was mentioned on that panel. Evelyn wrote, "Someone thought that computer technology will get rid of reading and writing in thirty years." I think that both reading and writing are being **enhanced** by computer access—or does everybody believe that everything on the computer is sound and pictures? I thing that Kathy Ice is the most nearly correct in the opinions recorded here. In fact, I think that having kids connected to the computer is a great way to get them reading and writing. The challenge, here, is to get them off the computer and into reading the paper things which can be held in the hand. Also, and another challenge (insofar as

Art by Gene Stewart



fanzines are concerned), is to get them to take the things which they have been writing on the computer and sending the best of them to fanzines. I mean, those twelve-year-olds inputting written words through their keyboards are doing more with words than most of us old codgers were doing with typers when we were their age.

Bob Devney would be less boggled by the thought of a weekly zine if he took thought about the fact that there have been weekly APAs. The original one was *APA-F*. Still going strong, even though a bit anemically. I believe (I do not contribute to it) so is *APA-L* at LASFS. After decades (I think that it was started sometime in the 60s—and it had only 1 hiatus (about 65 months duration) it still comes out weekly. Currently, I believe, all of its members are local; however, in the past, it had regular contributors from all over the country. And none of it is on-line—it is all paper being collated every Thursday evening.

I guess that most of us misread things which have been written; however, unless the editor made some creative word changes in the copy send to Gene Stewart so that my name was typoed, I have to point out to Gene that I have not recently undergone a sex-change operation and that I am the same old boring male which I have been for the past 62 years. Contrary to some indications, though, I have had some changes of opinion over that period of time. I still feel, though, that SF is words on paper and that the garbage purporting to be SF which is perpetrated on screens of various sizes is no more SF than is some of the idiosyncratic nonsense one finds in comical books. Basically, I am a reader, and I know the reading material which I prefer.

And I have no anguished rage to throw at Joseph Nicholas if he feels it necessary to degrade the fine field of SF by considering visual trash as part of it, that is his loss. Obviously, his definition of SF is not congruent with mine, but I feel that this is no reason for letter-bombs. I will just add that I come from a generation older than his and that I prefer my more conservative definition of the field. So be it.

Fannishly yours,
Marty Cantor

[You'll be glad to know that NESFA Press is reprinting much of Hal Clement's work in omnibus volumes, including *Mission of Gravity*. Alas, I can't find any letter for *PB #41*. sorry. —The Editor]

Letters of Comment

January 26, 1998

Dear Helmuth and the gang:

Did I tell you that I moved when I got married?

Joseph T Major
1409 Christy Avenue
Louisville, KY 40204

Thank you.

LoneStarCon 2 Report by Evelyn Leeper:

Registration and Programming: Also, after registering for the con per se, program participants had to go to con ops, which were at the other end of the building on the second floor and required going outside, too.

Dealer's Room: A tote bag is now a necessity. I thought it was curious that obscure tapes were available but not commonplace ones; you could buy *Flavia: the Heretic* but not *Star Wars*. However, I suppose they figured that the fringe markets were more likely to sell. It was still inconvenient that Japanimation was available but rare SF movies were not. Lisa (the reason I—we—moved to Christy Avenue) found a shortage of rare book dealers, which inhibited her quest for a complete set of the works of Eric Temple "John Taine" Bell.

John Frederick Lange Reading: Pro Golf Michael "Moocock"—this has to qualify as one of the most embarrassing typos ever to crop up in a Program Book—almost refused to come when he learned that "John Norman" would be there. His *Gor* books have found their niche, being reissued by a S&M publisher.

SF Films: Well, *Paul Verhoeven's Starship Troopers* did indeed have a major impact. Bombs usually do. Budget: \$105 million. Projected final gross: \$55 million. So did *Alien Resurrection*. Budget: \$75 million. Projected final gross: \$48 million. (Figures from *Entertainment Weekly* for January 30, 1998.)

Alternate Histories and Alternate Futures: The first big Civil War alternate history was McKinlay Kantor's *If the South Had Won the Civil War* which was a Civil War Centennial tie-in. (The first I know of, which was not necessarily the first, was "If Lee Had Not Won the Battle of Gettysburg" in J. C. Squires's *If: or History Rewritten* in the thirties, but the author was someone outside the field.)

Goodbye, Kris! Hello, Gordon!: Did anyone say—did anyone *ask*—if the new restyled *F&SF* was going to have a letter column?

Myth, Religion, and Serious SF: SF has a legacy from the rationalists of the early part of the century, who maintained that religion was something that humanity would grow out of. So you get works like Anne McCaffrey's *Dragonflight*, which depicts people in a crisis

situation, where you would think that some metaphysical inspiration would be called for, but they have "grown out of religion" and worship nothing.

Even when you do get religion it is often uncomprehendingly portrayed. Authors who go to the last microcircuit to get their technology right and rigorously research historical matters toss off such wonders as "all the most conservative elements of all the different religions joined in a new faith" when it is the "most conservative elements" who will hold to the most different and divisive tenets!

State of the Genre: Australian and Far East SF/F: Did anyone address the apparently-popular subgenre of "Japan Won WWII" alternate-history in Japan? This even got reported in *The New York Times*.

Fantasy Debate: "Resolved: That J.R.R. Tolkien inhibited the development of modern fantasy": The fact that Michael Moorcock, who has a definite opinion on the matter, was not invited to debate the positive of this shows that the programmers were not really interested in having a discussion of the question.

Alternate Space: This remains alternate because 1) space advocates *assume* there is a "silent majority" in favor of space travel, so they make no effort to mobilize popular support; 2) space advocates tend to be in favor of one particular space program, so they divert much effort to attacking other programs; 3) space advocates often get diverted into wish-fulfilling but unsound ideas. Imagine, if you will, Donald Cargreaves (*Rocket Ship Galileo*) filing a suit against D. D. Harriman ("The Man Who Sold the Moon") to stop his project (out of the altruistic belief that Harriman's chemical-fueled rocket was a technological dead end) and Harriman responding by, among other things, sending Maureen Johnson down to seduce Art, Morrie, and Ross.

Religion in SF: I think you mean Victor Peretti, author of *This Perfect Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness*, and other Fundamentalist novels that read like fantasy. Roger Elwood, notorious anthology king of the seventies, is also in the Christian SF/F business.

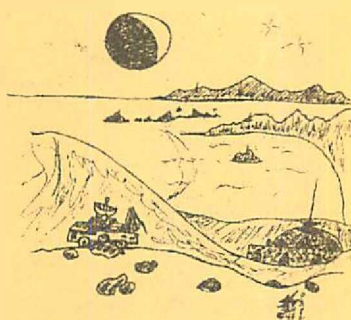
James Morrow "criticizes the church while saying that spirituality is part of what we are" but he makes certain assumptions, he goes by what secularists say the church believes, and these are not what the church(es) believe, which makes his fiction the equivalent of Catholic accusations that Jews stole the Host from churches and tortured it. This depends on the doctrine of transubstantiation—it would be meaningless for them to torture the Host because to them, it is just a piece of bread.

Zineophile: As a side-line to his review of *Emerald City* Devney comments that "Woody Allen once said his parents' values were 'God and carpeting.'" Better than the ones that Allen has.

Letters of Comment:

Marty Cantor: His complaint about fans not being aware of the history (see also the report in *Zineophile* about the South African Tolkien Society [their motto should be

Art by Gene Stewart



Letters of Comment

Minyamar, "First-home"} finding of the attendees at their Medieval Feaste that: "Most of the younger generation have not heard of or thought about JRR Tolkien....[they] have no idea of the printed word" (PB 42, p 38)) is a symptom.

Mimosa prints new articles about old fan days, but what will we do when Walt Willis and Dave Kyle have passed on to the Great Slan Shack Out There?

J. Nicholas: "Is Cantor seriously suggesting that Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* is science fiction, while Paul Verhoeven's forthcoming film of it is not?" he says, and the film turned out to bring heavy support to Marty's thesis.

Arthur Hlavaty: The male version of yenta is "yentor." To use it in a sentence, "Harlan Ellison is a yentor." I understand that a substantial part of the *Xena: Warrior Princess* fan fiction is into the same-sex theme.

Gene "Old 815" Stewart: If Vonnegut believes what he said in *Timequake*, that the written word was a moribund form already replaced by multimedia, why did he write a novel? In the seventies John Simon took a rest from slanging movies and plays to write a column for *Esquire* on the decline and fall of the language. This is a man who learned English from a teacher who assigned him *A Princess of Mars*. Anyhow, one of the buffoons Simon assailed was a professor named Peter Wagshal, who wrote an article in 1978 titled "Illiterates with Doctorates", about how in 20 years computer media would render the written word obsolete. Twenty years later, the big computer thing is the Net...with all those written words.

Joseph T Major

January 29, 1998

Dear Lisa and NESFans:

Proper Boskonian 42 (what a fannish issue! what a fannish number!) has squeezed through the mailslot in the door, having run the gauntlet of heavy hands of two mail systems, and I shall attempt to take them out of the picture by e-mailing this loc. I haven't done many this way, and they're being e-mailed via Yvonne's work server, but if the generosity of friends comes through, I may have home-based e-mail capabilities soon. In the meantime, let's see if this e-loc can get through...

Things are looking good for getting to Baltimore this year, so wish us luck in saving the required money. I gather the Toronto in 2003 party was well-received in San Antonio, and we sold nearly 250 pre-supporting memberships. Two topics which may have been discussed in the intervening years...what's happened to the masquerade at most conventions, including Worldcon, and why isn't there a Fandom: The Next Generation? What's pulling new readers away from science fiction fandom?

There are two well-known names in e-zine fandom I don't really know, and they are Ulrika O'Brien and Cheryl Morgan. I plan to contact them and ask for their zines...same goes for William Danner and E.B. Frohvet. I know Ulrika just won TAFF, but honest, I don't think I've read anything she's written, because it's all on-line. I didn't review *Probe* a few years back, did I, Bob? I thought it was just a couple of

issues ago. No matter. I want to meet the South Africans in Baltimore, which is one big reason why I really want to get there.

Marty Cantor's letter made me smile...I have just marked twenty years in fandom, and I realize now that I've been receiving fanzines for fifteen, since late 1982. So yes, I know about Harry Warner's dungeon, and some of the other legends of latter-day fanzine fandom. One fannish word I haven't seen for a while (because Marty hasn't been in the funny zines for a while) is "arkle".

Veritable Fannish Institution...I should have that tattooed on my butt. Or perhaps, I could have business cards made up...Dr. Lloyd Penney, director-general of the Veritable Fannish Institute. I wonder what kinds of studies would take place inside the Veritable Fannish Institution?

My letter...well, we did have that mail strike, and I admit I did what most people did (Harry Andruschak's going to hate me for this one)...I wrote as many letters as I could during the strike, and stuff the already-bulging mailboxes on the corner. I know a few fanzines were turned back at the border, and returned to sender marked "Undeliverable because of strike". If anyone sent me a fanzine and had it returned, it's now safe; a settlement should be imposed any day now.

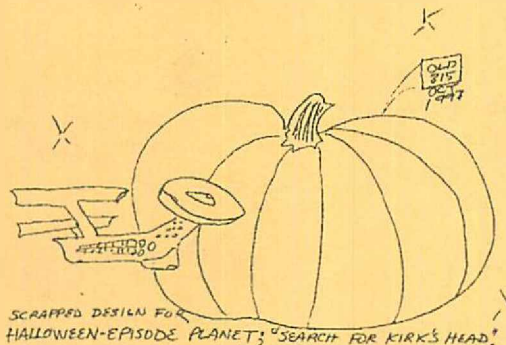
A response to Gene Stewart (and Tschuß wisely to you, too)...we DID win those pointy little Aurora awards, both of us. I haven't seen *Locus* in a couple of months, but all the winners had their pictures taken, and an article and the photos were submitted to Charlie Brown...we'll just have to see what happened. Lisa, you didn't run the list of Aurora winners!

Well, this loc wasn't as long as I thought it might be. The job hunt continues...I am a freelance proofreader for a company in the east end of town, and they expect me to be on call and there on a moment's notice, but they have provided me with 8+ hours of work for January, and that's all. At least, the sending out of resumes never ended, so the search continues. Take care, and I'm sure the next issue will be out soon.

Yours,

Lloyd Penney.

[Except for a few special symbols, the letter came through fine. The Aurora Award Nominations were too late for me to publish, and the winners too early...PB takes about a month to collate, alas.—Editor]



Art by Gene Stewart

Letters of Comment

Feb. 5, 1998

Dear Ms. Hertel,

Interesting and well-done covers by Joe Mayhew (*Proper Boskonian* #42)—the kind of artwork that makes you want to know more.

Great and very funny illos by Ian Gunn, including the wizard with the magic potion of heeling, the bad leg, clothes maketh the man, and waiting for a fillo... I'm pleased to learn that there'll be more *Space*Time Buccaneers*; and I loved the idea of the plesiosaur going back in time via Loch Ness.

Another thorough con report (*LoneStarCon 2*) by Evelyn Leeper. I would imagine even those that went to the con can learn a lot from her reports. I especially enjoyed the Alternate History panel report (BTW, the Sidewise Award for Alternate History currently has three nominations in the long form category: *Pacific Empire* by G. Miki Hayden, *Dinosaur Summer* by Greg Bear, and *Making History* by Stephen Fry; and none in the short form.), the Magical Realism panel report (I didn't know that!), and the Alien Autopsy, among others.

Bob Devney's *Zineophile* coverage is great; I must check out the Tom Swift web site (*SF Revu*). I love Tom Swifties, she said caressingly. I haven't seen "Shall We Dance?" (I know it got good reviews), but if I do, I shall probably be one of the few people who know that's a piece of squid he's dancing with (*Mt Void*).

Most Appreciatively,

Joy V. Smith (pagadan@aol.com)

[Thanks for the kind comments, as always. Your e-mail came through fine, by the way; there's no need to send paper back-up if you don't want to do so. —The Editor]

18 March 1998

Dear Lisa & All Proper Boskonians —

Thanks for 42.

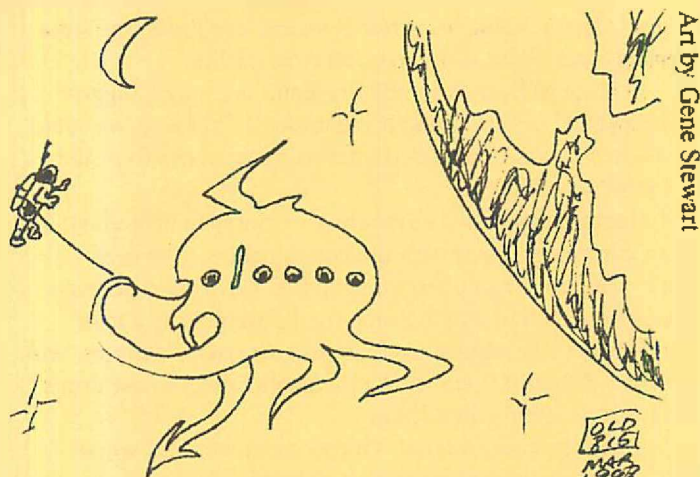
The Joe Mayhew covers showed an interesting range. The front cover was moody and subtle, while the back cover was whimsical and fun. Both excellent.

Ian Gunn's TREKtoon on page 4 — So the Bearded One leans to the right, eh? Always suspected as much.

Evelyn C. Leeper's *LoneStarCon 2 Report* was comprehensive, detailed, and savvy, although marred by several misunderstood/ misreported references or details. Examples: Buckminster Fuller's name is used in Buckyballs and Buckminsterfullerene because his early work on geodesics defined the basic shape of the carbon molecules involved. Also, *Smilla's Sense of Snow* is the title, not Smilla's *Sense of Snow*. Based on Peter Høeg's cowardly novel. (It gets cold feet at the end & falls apart.)

Other than these kinds of quibbles, it was a good con report. And, as usual, I was boggled and appalled by many of the reported comments made by many of the participants. No wonder things are such a damned mess all the time.

The many Gunntoons earn him pun fines galore, methinks.



Art by Gene Stewart

My favorite was the Cattle-Mutilating Transvestite Werewolf Cowboy. I went to school with at least two of them.

Bob Devney's *Zineophile* offered an interesting mix, and performed, for me, a service — it allowed me to feel familiar with the contents of these four excellent zines in a witty, trenchant digest form. I'm not sure which one interests me the most. Maybe all of them. Good stuff all around.

I'm also glad to hear that Updike's typical pedestrian fixations have once again brought him in below expectations. He's one of the most overrated, and self-indulgent, writers ever, and I've never understood why his "work" creates such critical hoopla. Unless no one actually ever tries to read it. An understandable situation. Updike writing sf? In his would-be wet dreams.

Ian Gunn's *Space*Time Buccaneers* remains one of my favorite series ever. I'm heartened that there is to be more, but only six installments of prologue? Ah, well.

Now, if we can only get James Cameron to film this series...

Letters of Comment — I'd prefer seeing the letter-writer's name, if not the address, too, at the start of a letter, so I've a better idea in whose voice I ought to be reading. As published here, I just went to the end each time, but the back-and-forth was annoying.

Joseph T. Major's Brando fat-joke was unworthy of both.

Also, I think Nippon's fallen are prayed to not as ghods, but as spirits, and the prayers would be for intercession, not miracles. We lived in Japan for four years, courtesy of the USAF and International Imperialism, and saw many shrines & temples, as well as crowded graveyards where families met regularly to regale the departed with tales of their quotidian grinds. Amazing stuff, ancestor worship.

As for the Xena/Zima thing, my 13-year-old dog has borne the name Xeno all his life — my coinage, from Strange, as, indeed, he's always been. No need to mix any of that nasty toy malt liquor into things, though, when you've got dog drool going for you.

Incidentally, Leeper's goof, when she conflated Xeno with Zeno, was incorrectly "corrected" by Arthur D. Hlavaty. Zeno was, indeed, a Greek philosopher (Mr. Paradox), but Xeno is not "a warrior prince with his own TV

Letters of Comment

show". That's Xena, a warrior princess, of course. She's the female incarnation of my dog, as cited earlier.

In place of Best Dramatic Presentation, may I suggest the category Best Damned Presentation? That way, we could include all sorts of new and interesting episodes from the Grand Public Theater.

Harry Cameron Andruschak — Sorry to hear about your continuing woes with the beta-blockers. I've been lucky. No unwanted effects plague me. However, I've been having one hell of a time dropping the weight my doctor advises, despite regular exercise and decreased calories, and I'm wondering if there isn't a metabolic effect of the drugs that affects weight-loss. Ideas?

Also, hey, cheer up, lad. Things can always get worse. I've just gone through several months of dental work, myself. Chronic depression, in my case, not Thunderbird — and by the way, isn't that supposed to rot guts, not teeth?

Tom Endrey's discussion of art was fascinating, and might be the germ of a great article, **Lisa**. Hint wink nudge.

Joseph Nicholas made some daring comments about **B5** — a show I've never seen, having been here in Meatland, (a.k.a. Germany), for too long — but he may be interested to know that, in my household, **DEEP SPACE 9** is known as **DEEP SLEEP 9**, due to its interminable talkiness and lack of passion.

As for all TV sf tending toward soap-opera, well, fair enough, as long as you realize that soaps remain popular, and generate fan loyalty, largely because the focus devolves to human situations. In other words, soaps magnify typical entanglements we've all seen or felt, and any TV show wanting to stay on air must do the same, really. Novelty, and spanking-fresh ideas, won't cut it. And formula develops precisely because those patterns work.

An insistence on originality is a neophyte's adumance, a sophomoric fixation on but one of many aspects that go into good, even great, fiction. Shakespeare would have laughed and shaken his head in incomprehension, had you confronted him with a mandate for total originality — he borrowed, stole, and performed variations on existing works habitually. And the composer G. F. Handel did the same in music — this notion of copyright, and its emphasis on originality, is relatively new in the arts.

This is where the old argument that sf is the literature of ideas falls apart. New ideas are, firstly, rare. Secondly, it's easier to find a new angle on established ideas. Third, novelty wears off — which explains why most sf innovations are found first in short stories, then expanded into novels, then become commonplace. It's a short-form consideration, the notion that a literature can be sustained on ideas. What's necessary to sustain long-term interest is the human factor — not ideas, but people. The fiction must speak to the readers in an understandable, human way, or all you've got left is the appeal of the isolated idea, and that just won't keep on keeping on.

Sf is certainly the one genre most welcoming to new ideas, and it will always respond to ideas in a useful way, but ideas alone do not a genre make, nor a series sustain.

Mary Cantor's odd notion that only published hard-copy fiction can qualify as sf strikes me as more a polemic than a fully-developed, defensible assertion. It's a squib, with low-yield bang to it, a momentary diversion.

Also, how come there are so many Luddites — and proud, loud ones, at that — in fandom?

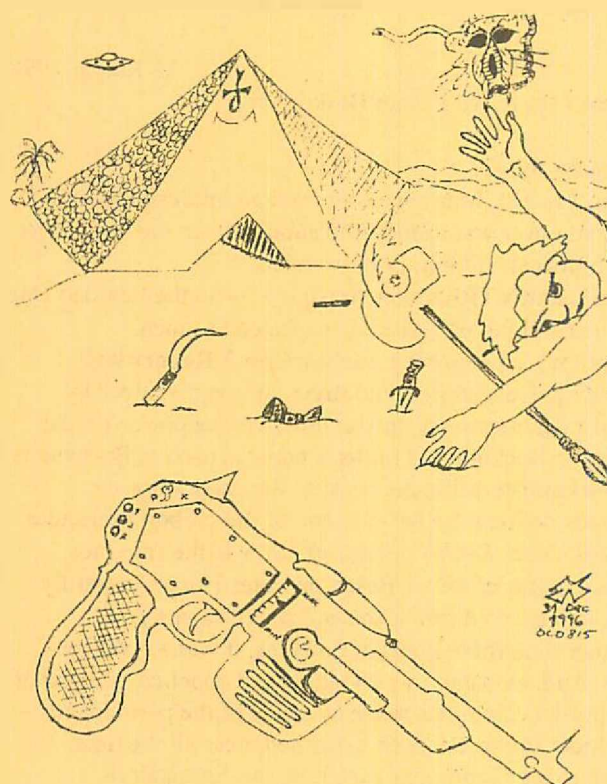
Lloyd Penney — Sowhat's your royalty percentage for supplying Sawyer with your name and the Hawaiian shirt character trait?

Laurraine Tutihasi - Thanks for the kind word about my article, "SF, UFOs, and A Sense of Wonder".

K. W. Jeter's *BladeRunner 2: The Edge of Human* is the only real sf I've read lately. Good, solid book that picks up -where the movie **BLADERUNNER** and Philip K. Dick's book *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* leave off. Yes, this book combines the two, and tries to smooth away any contradictions. It does a pretty good job, but Jeter's technique shows through a bit in the steady rhythm of tension/release and the set-em-up, knock-em-down succession of cliffhanger chapters. What's best about this book is being with the Rick Deckard character some more, and getting to know the landscape a bit better. This one was good enough that I'll read Jeter's second *BladeRunner* book, too, sometime. Try it. If you liked either PKD's book or Ridley Scott's movie, you'll probably like it.

May we all find peace, light, and love, or at least fresh batteries.

Tschüß wisely —
Gene Stewart
Old 815



Art by Gene Stewart

Letters of Comment

March 24, 1998

Dear Editor:

I apologize for being so far behind with my reading. We moved last June and managed to fall behind months behind with everything. We bought a house, and it is taking up a lot of time. I had the patio replaced this winter. Now I am interviewing prospective landscapers to do the garden. In the meantime, we are also using the services of a handyman to fix a few minor things around the house.

I am trying hard to catch up with my reading, but it's a struggle.

I have been following SPACE*TIME BUCCANEERS closely. That and the letters of comment are the parts I pay closest attention to.

I noticed that the letters column does not include addresses, except for e-mail addresses. This differs from the practice of most fanzines. Is there a reason for this?

Laurraine Tutihasi (ltutihasi@aol.com)

[I haven't publish addresses because PB mostly goes to NESFA members, who get the roster regularly. However, since you ask for it, I published the addresses of non-NESFA members who contribute letters in this issue. —The Editor]

From the Internet:

Fri, 23 Jan 1998

At one point we had some reservations about even running a Fanzine Lounge at Lone Star Con 2; with some concerns about attendance figures and corresponding budget worries, and our own personal knowledge that a good number of fanzine fans would not be attending, we weren't sure it would be a worthy investment of the convention's time and money. As it worked out, the Fanzine Lounge was a considerable success, and we think we learned some lessons about its value to the modern Worldcon.

Getting the basic figures out of the way: We did over \$1400 in sales out of the Fanzine Lounge, with most publishers donating a portion of the proceeds to one fan fund or another, including \$191.06 for TAFF and \$182.86 for DUFF. We also sold about as many copies of the Roy Tackett collection as Scott and Jane Dennis did through the Sales-to-Members area. The items for sale covered a wide spectrum of fannish interests: fannish genzines like *FOSFAX* and *Mimosa*; litcrit zines like *Nova Express*, *Tangent* and *Out Of James's Attic*; a bewildering variety of personalzines. And just about everything sold at least a copy or two, and many sold incredibly well. At \$25 a pop, we sold all seven copies of *Warhoon 28* (the hardbound Willis collection) that Joe Siclari gave us, leaving him only the display copy he brought for his historical fanzine exhibit.

One woman told us she didn't subscribe or write letters to fanzines, but came to Worldcon every year to pick up the latest *Mimosa*. And sure enough, *Mimosa 19* sold out, after

poor Richard Lynch had to restock several times. (Back issues sold very well, too.) This made us rethink a perhaps commonly-held idea, that while fanzine rooms at Worldcons cater to the converted, they don't do a lot of outreach to fans who aren't already hardcore active members of "fannish" fanzine fandom. Rather, it seems there's a substantial audience of silent readers out there who rely on fanzine sales at Worldcon to satisfy their fix, and we may even have reached a few of the folks who popped their heads in to see what all the fuss was about.

Even Forrest J. Ackerman came into the Fanzine Lounge and bought a fanzine. After the Sam Moskowitz memorial panel—conveniently located next door—let out, a horde of attendees descended on the lounge to buy copies of "...After All These Years," SaM's memoir of his years in science fiction publishing, one of Ed Meskys's special *NIEKAS* publications.

It was also gratifying to help some fans with their particular problems. Robin Johnson told us he was buying many items to replace those that disappeared in the mails after he shipped the lot to Australia from a previous Worldcon. And we're especially indebted to NESFA for sending us two copier-paper cartons full of back issues of *The Proper Boskonian*. When we mentioned these to Ed Meskys, he said one issue from 1968 had a really great article he wanted, but he'd lent his copy to someone years ago and never got it back. It was just a short walk to the stack of fanzines and *voila!* His collection was complete again. Where else but at Worldcon, we ask you.

We'd like to thank our invaluable staff—George Flynn, a man who knows his way around a Worldcon, for being available to undertake various missions while we were anchored to the room; Randy Smith; Richard Lynch; and special thanks to Dick and Leah Smith, Spike Parsons, and Mark and Priscilla Olson, for helping line up an appropriate location and arranging special events for us; and of course to Karen Meschke, for making a fanzine lounge possible when it looked like it might be a dicey proposition indeed.

In short, we did it, it worked, and we're glad we did.

Richard Brandt and Michelle Lyons
<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/8720>

From Corflu UK (www.imi.gla.ac.uk/corflu):

The 1998 FAAn Awards went to:

Best new fan — Lesley Reece

Best letterhack — Harry Warner Jr.

Best fan artist — D West

Best fanzine — *Idea*, edited by Geri Sullivan

Best fan writer — A gobsmacked Christina

Everything I Learned About Buying and Renovating Buildings I Learned from Monty Wells

by Laurie Mann

April 16, 1998

<http://www.city-net.com/~lmann/essays/monty.html>

Back in the early '80s, Jim and I moved to Boston and became very active in NESFA and MCPI. One of the major tasks NESFA members undertook in those days was to look for a clubhouse. We looked at old houses and old storefronts all over the Boston area.

One of the leaders of this search was a newcomer to NESFA named Monty Wells. Monty was a teacher at a local high school with a teenaged daughter. We soon discovered that among Monty's talents was that he knew everything — and I mean everything — about carpentry, building codes and how to decide if the building you're looking at is right for you.

Monty often got "first looks" at various buildings, since he was interested and really understood buildings. He could evaluate a building with an agent to figure out if it was worthwhile getting other folks in the club to look at it. I particularly remember a building that had been an old theater off Watertown that we went to see several times. Monty explained what was going on with the wiring, the floor boards, even the fire escape. I think Monty might have been looking forward to the challenge of turning an old theater into the NESFA clubhouse. But we finally decided the theater wasn't quite right for us, so we went on with the search.

Finally, after years of prowling the classified ads of the Boston Globe, we found an old dry cleaner's in Somerville. The price was definitely right, but it did require an awful lot of work. Monty led us through the joys of ripping out floor-to-ceiling cleaning machines. Not to mention finding the 6' long piece of equipment that later had a life after the dry cleaners. Monty created a suitable resting place for the equipment that withstood quite a few adventures over the years... *[the Shaft]*.

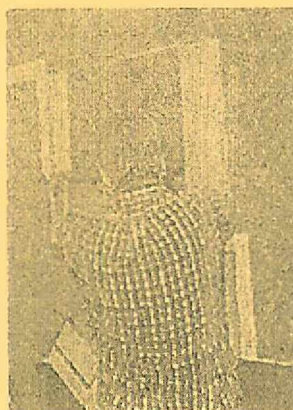
Monty was very happy with tools, from the basic sledgehammer to the latest circular saw. He probably used every piece he owned and many he borrowed to help get the clubhouse habitable. He showed us how to rip down walls, put up new ones, level floors and put new flooring down.

Monty was not a traveling fan, but he did work on Boskones and Noreascons. He worked with Chip Hitchcock to create the "tinker toy" art show setup. He was often one of the first to load the logistics truck and one of the last to leave after it was all unloaded.

In addition to all his work for the club, you could always get Monty to help out with other projects. Many of us bought houses back in the '80s, and Monty's expertise helped all of us. The fact that I'd followed him on a dozen house tours before we started looking for a house on our own meant I knew what questions to ask and why a solid steel main beam was such a good thing to have. I have a photo of Monty ripping down part of our dining room wall in our first house. The last thing he did for us was to rebuild our dining room steps before we moved to Pittsburgh.

We haven't seen Monty too much over the last few years, other than our annual trip up to Boskone. We had heard from friends that he'd developed cancer, so when we saw him at this year's Boskone, he was gaunt and tired. But his mind was still quite lively, and it was a real pleasure to see him again.

Unfortunately, Monty died of cancer on April 15, 1998. The tax man cometh...



Monty Wells hard at work on the Mann's kitchen. (photo: Laurie Mann)

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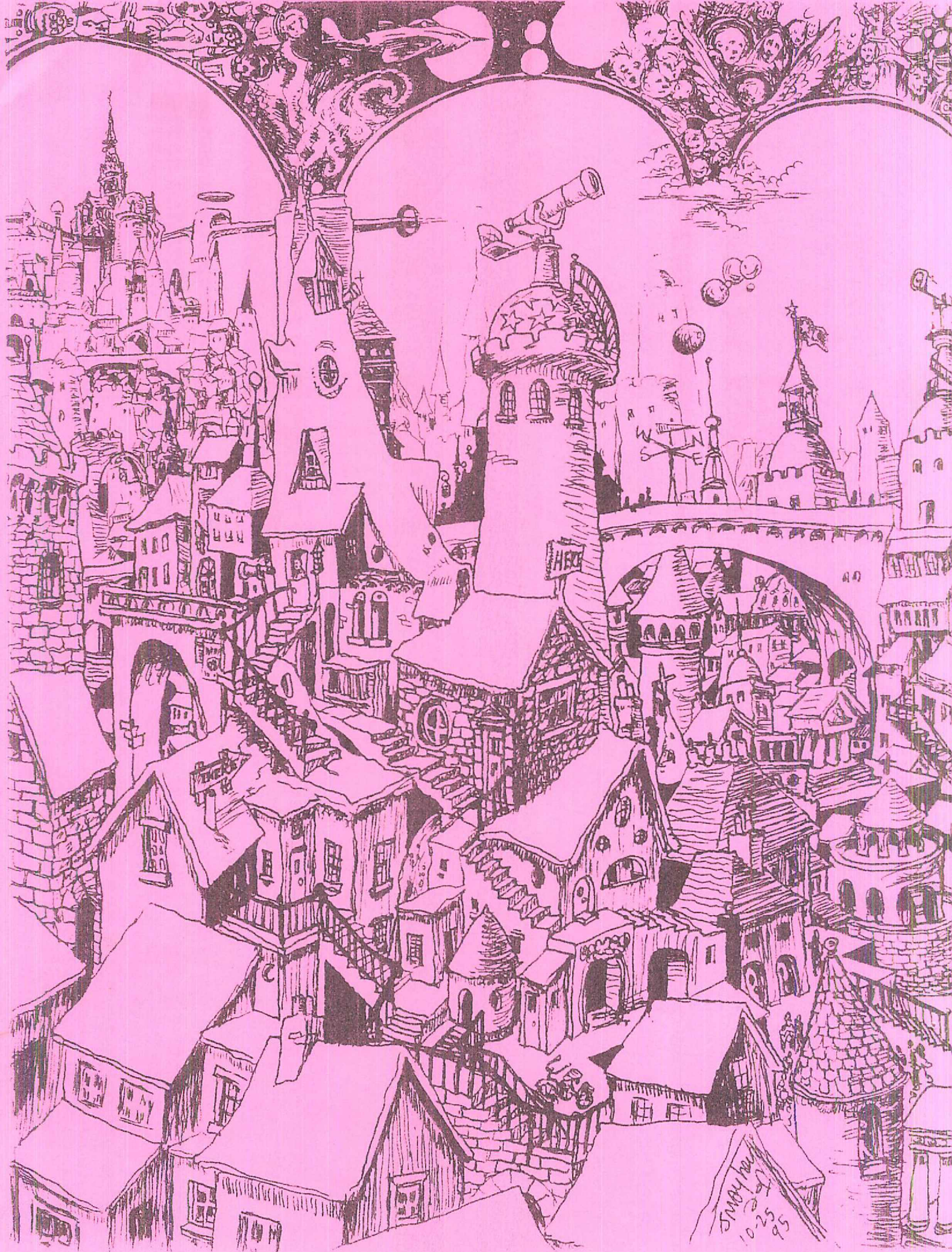
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